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THESIS

SECURITY COOPERATION IN AFRICA: LESSONS FROM ECOMOG

by

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December 1997

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**SECURITY COOPERATION IN AFRICA:
LESSONS FROM ECOMOG**

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//
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Bachelor of Laws, University of Ghana, 1992

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND
CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that when West African states united to form the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), they did so for reasons very different from those that are advanced by most scholars and West African policy makers. The conventional wisdom holds that the ECOMOG intervention in Liberia was motivated by the desire of West African leaders to relieve the humanitarian disaster caused by the Liberian civil war. In contrast, I will argue that humanitarian considerations were far less important to the participating states than their desire to protect the political stability of their own regimes, which they believed would be threatened by a rebel victory over President Samuel Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). In particular, they worried that a rebel victory in Liberia would constitute a dangerous precedent for other dissidents within the sub-region. Moreover, they were concerned that a Charles Taylor-controlled Liberia could become a "breeding ground" for similar insurgencies by dissidents fleeing their regimes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. THE PUZZLE OF ECOMOG.....	1
B. SO WHAT?-- SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LIBERIAN CASE	2
C. HOW?--RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES	4
II. THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: WHEN AND WHY DO SOVEREIGN STATES FORM ALLIANCES OR COALITIONS?.....	7
A. BALANCING VERSUS BANDWAGONING	8
B. ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS.....	12
C. APPLICATION OF THEORY TO THE NPFL, ECOMOG AND WEST AFRICAN LEADERS	12
D. HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS: A “NEW” HYPOTHESIS, A MASK OR REALITY? ...	16
1. Concern for Refugees.....	17
III. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: 1822-1989	21
A. THE BLACK REPUBLIC: THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY (ACS) OR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT?	21
B. THE AMERICO-LIBERIAN HEGEMONY: THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT.....	23
C. DOE: REFORMER OR CATALYST OF CONFLICT?	27
1. The U.S.—A Friend or Foe?.....	29
2. The NPFL Rebel Challenge.....	32
IV. THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)	35
A. ECOWAS: THE SEEDS OF SLUMBER (1975-1989).....	36
1. Record of Inaction.....	37
B. THE SMC TO ECOMOG: SLUMBER TO ACTION	39

1. Begging Questions?	40
V. MOTIVATIONS FOR INTERVENTION: HUMANITARIANISM VERSUS REALPOLITIK..... 43	
A. HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS	43
B. THE SMC’S HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS: RHETORIC OR REALITY?	46
C. REALPOLITIK RATIONALE FOR ECOMOG.....	48
1. Cross-Border Activities of Refugees	50
2. The Composition of ECOMOG.....	53
3. Rescue of Doe or Self-Preservation?	54
4. Sub-Regional Relationships.....	57
a. Houphouet Boigny and Doe.....	58
VI. REGIME LEGITIMACY AND STABILITY AS MOTIVE FOR INTERVENTION. 61	
A. SOURCES OF LEGITIMACY AND STABILITY CONCERNS	62
1. Sierra Leone: Momoh’s Legitimacy and Security Crises	64
B. NIGERIA: A LEGEND OF INSTABILITY AND ILLEGITIMACY	66
1. Classic Praetorianism and Corruption	67
2. Diversity: A Strength or Weakness?.....	69
3. Impact of Colonial Divide-and-Rule	71
4. A Lagging Timebomb?	73
C. GHANA: IS THERE REALLY A DIFFERENCE?	74
D. THE ETHNIC OR TRIBAL DIMENSION OF CIVIL WAR: POTENTIAL SPREAD.....	77
E. THE DISSIDENT FACTOR	79
VII. RATIONALE FOR RELIANCE ON ECOMOG (A BOAT TO THE RESCUE)..... 83	
A. BRIDGING THE ANGLOPHONE-FRANCOPHONE DIVIDE	83
1. La Communaute and Regional Security Cooperation.....	84

2. “Communaute Franciere Africaine” (CFA) Zone	86
3. British Commonwealth of Independent States and Regional Security..	89
4. A Rescue?.....	90
VIII. CONCLUSION	93
A. EFFECTS, LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF ECOMOG	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY	99
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	105

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis argues that when West African states united to form the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), they did so for reasons very different from those that are advanced by most scholars and West African policy makers. The conventional wisdom holds that the ECOMOG intervention in Liberia was motivated by the desire of West African leaders to relieve the humanitarian disaster caused by the Liberian civil war. In contrast, I will argue that humanitarian considerations were far less important to the participating states than their desire to protect the political stability of their own regimes, which they believed would be threatened by a rebel victory over President Samuel Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). In particular, they worried that a rebel victory in Liberia would constitute a dangerous precedent for other dissidents within the sub-region. Moreover, they were concerned that a Charles Taylor-controlled Liberia could become a "breeding ground" for similar insurgencies by dissidents fleeing their regimes.

The process by which ECOMOG evolved helps clarify some of the broader questions concerning why and how sovereign states overcome their conflicting national interests and form coalitions. This thesis also has an important practical value: it examines how West Africans may be able to join together to deal with future instabilities in the region.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. THE PUZZLE OF ECOMOG

With the decline of the Cold War and the attendant changes in the global security environment, sub-Saharan Africa is becoming increasingly marginalized in the context of international security. In particular, U.S. policy makers often fail to see any vital strategic interests in sub-Saharan Africa to merit a direct U.S. intervention in its regional conflicts. Africans must solve their own problems. In this regard, the joint intervention of West African nations into the Liberian civil war offers an important case study of regional cooperation. What were the motivations for West African nations to join this coalition? What are its consequences for theories of international cooperation on alliance formation? What are the practical implications for the future of regional cooperation in general, and West African security cooperation in particular ?

This thesis argues that when West African states united under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to form the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) directed at Liberia, they did so for reasons very different from those that are advanced by most scholars and West African policy makers. The conventional wisdom holds that the ECOMOG intervention in Liberia was motivated by the desire of West African leaders to relieve the humanitarian disaster caused by the Liberian civil war.

In contrast, I will argue that humanitarian considerations were far less important to the participating states than their desire to protect the political stability of their own regimes, which they believed would be threatened by a rebel victory over President Samuel Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). In particular, they worried that a rebel victory in Liberia would constitute a dangerous precedent and incentive to other dissidents within the sub-region. Moreover, they were concerned that a Charles Taylor-controlled Liberia could become a "breeding ground" for similar insurgencies by dissidents and exiles fleeing their own regimes. The latter concern was compounded by intelligence indicating the participation of dissidents from other West Africa states

trained in Libya and Burkina Faso, in aid of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).

Specifically, I contend that an armed rebel victory over Doe's AFL will threaten the stability and legitimacy of sub-regional governments for the following reasons:

- (i) the precedent value of a total NPFL rebel victory over a dreaded dictatorship, characteristic of other regimes within the sub-region;
- (ii) widespread intelligence indicating that the core of Charles Taylor's rebel army consisted of dissidents from other ECOWAS states and the suspicions that a consolidated rebel government in Monrovia would in turn provide a staging ground from which these dissidents will unseat their home regimes;
- (iii) the subsequent degeneration of what began as a welcome revolt against Doe into a full-scale factional, ethnic, or tribal war with a propensity to infest and spread beyond Liberia's borders;¹
- (iv) coupled with (ii), rebel leader Charles Taylor, while being hotly pursued by Doe prior to his successful insurgency campaign, had been harshly treated by some sub regional regimes;
- (v) the uncontrolled influx of refugees across the Community was resulting in an unmanageable and uneasy domestic security situation in most member states; and
- (vi) the implicit but unequivocal signal from the international community and in particular, the UN and U.S. that forthwith, irresponsible client states may never again be bailed out by international intervention.

B. SO WHAT? - SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LIBERIAN CASE

The African continent has become synonymous with political conflict since the 1950s and 1960s. Since the 1960s, Africans have witnessed major conflicts in Nigeria and the Congo, later Zaire and re-baptized in 1997 as the Democratic Republic of Congo.

¹ Stephen P. Riley, "Liberia and Sierra Leone: Anarchy or Peace in West Africa?", *Conflict Studies* 287, Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, February 1996, pp. 6, 9.

By the 1970s, Africa's wars had caught up with Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe), and the Western Sahara.²

Given the decline of the Cold War, the dominant opinion among U.S. policy makers is that the U.S. has no vital economic or security interests in Sub-Saharan Africa and therefore should not directly intervene in its crises. Consequently, the future of external intervention in the conflicts that plague the continent is going to depend more on what Africans can offer themselves and how they can unite to deal with regional instabilities. As such, the relevance and implications of ECOMOG for the prospects of humanitarian relief, political stability and regional security, especially in Africa, cannot be overemphasized.

In particular, it is important to examine the motivations and their implications for the guidance of future collective interventions. Traditionally, analysts have identified numerous reasons to doubt that West Africans can unite in the way that they did in ECOMOG, especially given the scale, costs, complexity and peculiar circumstances of the dynamics of West African politics in general, and the Liberian crises in particular.

The importance, necessity, and timely initiation of such sub-regional self-help mechanism is underscored by the recommendations of the Clinton administration, the UN and the international community to African governments to subscribe to an African Crises Response Force (ACRF). This is intended to pool African troops into a collective mechanism for intervention in the conflicts on the continent. This is part of the 1997 U.S. national security policy, which emphasizes a more direct role for regional and sub-regional organizations in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.³

To successfully develop viable regional and sub-regional collective security mechanisms, it is important to understand the fundamental motivations and strategic behavior and calculations of regional and sub-regional security actors. As a model for regional cooperation, ECOMOG offers positive as well as negative lessons. It shows how sovereign states can synthesize their selfish national interests and unite to deal with

² Raymond W. Copson, *Africa's Wars and Prospects for Peace*, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1994, p. xv.

³ "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," The White House, May 1997, p. 28.

common concerns and mutual interests. Besides ECOWAS members had the opportunity of learning the lessons of diplomacy, compromise and negotiations over sensitive issues of national security. Operationally, ECOMOG tested the capacity of West Africa states to maintain sustained levels of commitment in a comprehensively costly military operation in the context of the military, economic, political and social circumstances of ECOMOG states. Among others, ECOMOG's bad lessons include the strong resurgence of Anglophone Francophone rivalries. I argue these understandings can help regional leaders themselves to define more effective, and feasible modalities (operationally and otherwise) for invoking and regulating future interventions. The unclear mandate and motives of ECOMOG, contributed to the setbacks, lack of confidence, leverage and cooperation that has characterized every aspect of the relationship between ECOMOG and the rebel factions.

Further, the alliance of West African states with a legacy of subtle disagreements in no less a mission than one of such severe economic, political, social, and military or security stakes, is relevant in grappling with the political phenomenon of how "small" states can unite around new leadership and organizations in response to crises in the absence of a leadership such as the U.S. or UN.

From a theoretical perspective, this thesis makes a modest contribution to the understanding of how, when, and why, alliances and coalitions are formed. Significantly, it tests the validity of Euro-centric international relations propositions in the context of the political dynamics of the post-colonial modern African state.

C. HOW? - RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This research is basically a historical case study which incorporates primary research based on interviews with West African policy makers.

In doing this historical analysis, I also used reports by newspapers and scholarly journals on Africa and security issues, textbooks, electronic resources (Internet and Lexis Nexis, etc.). UN and ECOWAS resolutions, documents, reports and communiqués, including, U.S. newspaper reports, press releases and General Accounting Office

Publications (GPO) on Liberia and multilateral intervention will all be examined and evaluated.

However, this research will be constrained by the fact that the Liberian conflict endures and as such ECOMOG is still an ongoing operation. Consequently, substantial relevant information is likely to be unavailable due to the security implications of disclosure and publicity, as well as basic reasons of political expediency. For the same reasons, politicians and participating soldiers of member states are likely to be evasive on important and critical questions that will be the subject matter of interviews and questionnaires. Notwithstanding these limitations, I am of the opinion that so much has been said, written, or done since the advent of ECOMOG. The resulting literature should avail a diligent research a modest resource base on which one can reasonably attempt to resolve the issues addressed by this thesis.

Further, the phenomenon of causal motivations which this thesis proposes to establish, does not lend itself to direct quantification, and measurement. Statistical manipulations can barely help address the issues posed. In order to elicit any meaningful evidence of the motives or perceptions that underlie the minds and behaviors individuals and groups or organizations acting for and behalf of sovereign states in their international relations a certain amount of conjuncture is necessary. This is more so in the realm of national and international security concerns which seldom of transparency.

Notwithstanding the constraints of this approach, I believe that critical case studies of specific events elicit the best evidence regarding the motives or causes of particular alliances. Consequently I relied extensively on statements by West African leaders from which inferences of motivations may be legitimate reached.

Further to buttress my conclusions against the traditional accusation of being anecdotal, I dug deeper to incorporate some primary research findings through an interview with Sir Dawda Jawara, ex-president of The Gambia and Chairman of ECOWAS, and the SMC at the time ECOMOG was launched. This exchange afforded me the exclusive opportunity hearing the view of one of the most accomplished statesmen of the African continent and principal architects of ECOWAS and ECOMOG. In addition are also interviewed other sub-regional policy actors of lesser profile as well as some

participants in ECOMOG. Some of the insights from these interactions although not specifically identified influenced some of the conclusions reached in this thesis.

Chapter II sets the theoretical foundations of this thesis, arguing basically that balance of power theoretical propositions of balancing and bandwagoning offer a plausible explanation of motivation for ECOMOG. Chapters III and IV offer historical and analytic accounts of the Liberian conflict and the legacy and roots of non-cooperation within ECOWAS respectively. Chapter V evaluates the humanitarian concerns vis-à-vis a the *realpolitik* preoccupation of West African leaders. Chapter VI examines the motive and sources of instability and illegitimacy of some of the key actors while chapter VII analyses the rational of resorting to ECOMOG as a “boat to the rescue.” Chapter VIII concludes this thesis by reflecting some of the effects, implications and lessons of ECOMOG for policy making.

II. THEORETICAL/ CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: WHEN AND WHY DO SOVEREIGN STATES FORM ALLIANCES OR COALITIONS?

The existing literature on how, when, and why sovereign nation states come together to form alliances or coalitions offers a valuable starting point for my case study of ECOMOG. Some international relations theorists argue that the alliance or coalition behavior of sovereign states is driven or characterized by balancing against perceived threats to their national interests or bandwagoning with the threat.

This chapter examines the conceptual and theoretical dynamics of the threat hypothesis vis-à-vis alternative theoretical explanations of factors that motivate sovereign national entities to reach collective decisions to form alliances or coalitions. I argue that while taking into account the context, peculiarities and constraints of West African states, Euro-centric international relations theoretical propositions are very much applicable to the understanding of the strategic thinking of African states. Further, I briefly discuss the concepts of alliances or coalitions and the application of these theoretical propositions to explaining the motivations of ECOMOG.

Ultimately, this chapter forms the theoretical and conceptual foundation on which I will subsequently base evidence to show that sub-regional governments, such as Nigeria, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ghana, etc., mutually perceived the prospect of a rebel military victory in Liberia as a major threat to their national security and regime legitimacy. Others, such as the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso, were lending covert and overt support to the insurgents and as such had no cause for apprehension. Consequently, the former group of states, against all odds, desperately mustered the political will and over-stretched their national capacities to accomplish an alliance against the threat. On the other hand, the latter group had no motivation to be part of such an effort, and indeed, subverted and undermined ECOMOG in subtle and direct ways, which amounted to allying with the rebel threat. In conclusion, I shall be suggesting that ECOMOG was a manifestation of Lord Brougham's thesis that "...whenever a sudden and great change takes place in the internal structure of a state, dangerous in a high

degree to all neighbors, they have a right to attempt, by hostile interference, the restoration of an order of things safe to themselves; or at least, to counter balance, by active aggression, the new force suddenly acquired. ...”⁴

Other theoretical explanations that have been advanced by international relations theorists, and political scientists to explain the causes or motivations of alliances in the international system includes the following:

- (i) alliances are formed in response to mutual or common threats (states may “balance or “bandwagon”);
- (ii) alliances are motivated by ideological or cultural affinities (also described as “birds of the same feather flocking together and flying apart”);
- (iii) alliances are motivated by foreign aid;
- (iv) alliances are caused by trans-national penetration;
- (v) alliances are motivated by humanitarian concerns.⁵

However, I consider these hypotheses of lesser explanatory force in relation to ECOMOG and will therefore accord them no detailed discussion in this thesis.

A. BALANCING VERSUS BANDWAGONING

The proponents of this hypothesis have explained that “alliances form and attract members fundamentally as response to perceived threats to national security.”⁶ Waltz argued that “...In the quest for security, alliances may have to be formed.”⁷ He cites the example of post-1890 Russia being faced with a German threat even if she defeated

⁴ Edward Vose Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power: A Case History of the Theory and Practice of One of the Great Concepts of European Statecraft*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955, p. 63. This is part of an extract the author quoted in extenso from *Lord Brougham's Works*, Vol. III, London: July, 1809, pp. 161-205.

⁵ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 17-49. The author develops hypotheses i-iv. Hypothesis v, which is essentially the anti-thesis to my argument, is the explanation of those West African leaders who back ECOMOG. Perhaps copying American style justifications for the interventions in Somalia, Bosnia, and to some extent the historic Operation Desert Storm.

⁶ Michael Don Ward, *Research Gaps in Alliance Dynamics*, Monograph Series in World Affairs, vol. 19 Book 1, Denver: Colorado Graduate School of International Affairs, University of Denver, p. 15.

Austria-Hungary to gain control of the straits linking the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. France, on the other hand, could regain possession of Alsace-Lorraine only by defeating Germany. The author concludes that “the perception of a common threat (Germany) brought Russia and France together.”⁸

It is important to note that, all these arguments are couched in balance of power vocabulary. However, they all have as a common thread, in the fact that it is a mutual threat that drives states to form alliance or coalitions. This is because even in classical balance of power theory, to cause the formation of alliances or coalitions, the perceived imbalances should pose a threat to the national security to compel independent states to be inclined to ally to balance or preserve the status quo. Therefore states do not form alliance or coalitions unless imbalances threaten them. The crux of these expositions which make them relevant, if not invaluable, to understanding the conduct of ECOWAS lies in the principle that confronted with a common threat to their national security, nation states would rise above less important differences to ally against the threat.

In classical international relations theory, even though threats tended to refer to the threat of one state to another or others, it did not exclude threats emanating from internal conflict of a neighboring state. The issue, therefore, seems to be more of how states perceive a threat irrespective of whether the source of the threat is the aggressive behavior of another state or a product of internal civil war within the sovereign jurisdiction of its neighbor. In my view, this issue is aptly put by Edward Gulick when he wrote that, “whenever a sudden and great change takes place in the internal structure of a State, dangerous in high degree to all its neighbors, they have the right to attempt, by hostile interference, the restoration of an order of things safe to themselves; or, at least, to counter-balance, by active aggression, the new force, suddenly acquired.”⁹

This underscores the fact that the critical test of this hypothesis is whether there is a development which constitutes a threat to national security, and whether the perception is shared by other states. Beyond this, it appears to be of very little import whether the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, p. 63. This struck me as a more elegant rendition of the central argument of this thesis.

is shared by other states. Beyond this, it appears to be of very little import whether the threat emanates from an aggressive external behavior of another state, or is a product of an intra-state upheaval. The fundamental importance of a mutual or common threat as the key to stimulating sovereign states to aggregate their military capabilities is underscored by the following circuitous but insightful statement by Sir Robert Walpole before the British House of Commons:

.....The use of alliances, Sir, has in the past years been too much experience to be contested. It is by leagues, well concerted and strictly observed, that the weak are divided against the strong, the bounds are set to the turbulence of ambition, that the torrent of power is restrained, and empires preserved from those inundations of war that, in former times laid the world in ruins. By alliances, Sir, the equipoise of power is maintained, and those alarms and apprehensions avoided, which must arise from vicissitudes of empire and the fluctuations of perpetual contest.¹⁰

Historical examples of alliances as balance of power devices in eighteenth century Europe included the alliances of the Seven Years' War, where Britain and Prussia joined against France and Austria; or the broader system of French alliance, which included Spain, the Ottoman Empire, Sweden and other smaller German states. Again, it is significant to note that even though these propositions are referable to the strategic responses of European states to threat, they represent important principles for rationalizing and understanding motivations of the principal actors in ECOMOG.

George Liska advances what are substantively threat hypothesis arguments as follows:

In theory, the relationship between alliances to the balance of power is simple enough. Put affirmatively, states enter into alliances to supplement each other's capability. Put negatively, an alliance is a means of reducing the impact of antagonistic power, perceived as pressure, which threatens one's independence.¹¹

¹⁰ Quoted in Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, p. 61. The author cites *Hansard Parliamentary History*, vol. XII, pp. 168-169.

¹¹ George Liska, *Nations in Alliances: The Limits of Interdependence*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1968, p26.

Once again, the criteria seem to depend on whether or not the power or threat is antagonistic, irrespective of whether it is a product of intra-state or extra-state conflict. This notion combines threat and balance of power arguments, and legitimately so, since they are in any case related. Clearly, the author was writing in 1968, a period when the international system was sharply characterized by the Cold War. Consequently, most alliances reflected the bipolar balance of power. Besides, the threat perception in that period was without doubt viewed from the East - West prism.

Similarly, Walt discusses the threat hypothesis in terms that reflect the implicit relationship between threat and power balancing. He posits that "When confronted with a significant threat, states may either balance or bandwagon."¹² According to him, balancing means "allying with others against the prevailing threat," while bandwagoning entails an "alignment with the source of the danger."

In the related field of what is being categorized as international cooperation theory, virtually the same principles have been employed to explain the influences on inter-state cooperation. Emphasizing that the perception of a common threat was an important condition for the viability of the concert of Europe at its peak from 1815 to 1823, it has been argued that "..... As the perception of common threat falls, the incentives to cooperate fall as well. Thus, the identification of and common agreement on an external threat are factors that create common interests and encourage cooperation."¹³ In my opinion, this proposition is very much in accord with the traditional international relations theorists whom I have quoted. Besides, the present author in her footnotes credits first principles to some of the same theorists. Consequently, to avoid restating the obvious, I shall briefly discuss some of the concepts of alliances and or coalitions before proceeding to evaluate the application of these propositions to the Liberian civil war and the responses of West African states.

¹² Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p.17.

¹³ Lisa L. Martin, "Foundations for International Cooperation," in Peter H. Smith, ed., *Drug Policy in the Americas*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992, p. 254.

B. ALLIANCES AND COALITIONS

The popularity and usage of the concept of alliances appears in European antiquity. In recent research, alliances have been defined as “bi/multilateral arrangements among nation-states involving national security-oriented coupling of formalized, (proclaimed or secret) strategic intentions and projected responses. For many, alliances are merely formalized international cooperation focusing on national security matters, generally in the form of intended responses to actual or perceived threats.”¹⁴ From this self-explanatory definition we can infer as common characteristics of an alliance, some or all of the following features:

- (i) a collaborative relationship involving two or more states;
- (ii) actual or potential aggregation of military forces and or resources;
- (iii) mutuality of national security interests;
- (iv) perceived or actual common threat; and/or
- (v) preference for collective over unilateral response to the perceived or actual threat.

In theory as well as in practice alliances or coalitions may encompass economic, social, and political dimensions of national security. This may be particularly relevant for ECOWAS which essentially evolving from an economic alliance to a military or strategic coalition. However, for the purposes of the present thesis alliances shall be used in reference to ECOMOG, the strategic or military aspect of West African cooperation.

C. APPLICATION OF THEORY TO THE NPFL, ECOMOG AND WEST AFRICAN LEADERS

I contend that humanitarian concerns were far less important to the ECOMOG participating states than their strategic concerns for the legitimacy and political stability of their own regimes. In particular, I argue that the most logical and plausible theoretical explanation of the motivation of the principal actors in ECOMOG is the hypothesis that,

¹⁴ Ward, *Research Gaps in Alliance Dynamics*, p. 5.

when confronted with a significant mutual threat, states may either ally with others against the threat, or ally with the source of the danger.¹⁵

Significantly, West African states did not feel threatened only in security, but also the legitimacy of their regimes. Arguably, national security in the context of most, if not all African states tends to boil down to the security and perpetuation of an incumbent regime. To put it with all possible political incorrectness, without exception, all the principal actors in ECOMOG were in very many ways not different from the infamous dictatorship of president Samuel Kanyon Doe which was under siege. "...If we watch Doe fall in such a disastrous fashion, what is the guarantee that this insurgency will not inspire some of our own countrymen to rise against us?" some may have asked themselves.

The nature of this threat was in terms of the implications of the challenge for dictatorships, the bases and legitimacy of whose claim to power was in many as spurious as the Doe regime. This contention is based on my assumption that in the context of small and weak states, especially in Africa, where military coups and armed insurgencies are a familiar occurrence, the national security of the state does not mean much more than the security and perpetuation of the regime or government of the day.

Indeed, in most African countries national security is derogated to the simple preservation and perpetuation of the personal rule of individuals barely capable of exercising authority over the entire political and economic spectrum of the state. As a result, William Zartman argues, neighboring states encroach on the collapsing state's sovereignty by involving themselves in its politics directly and by hosting dissident movements who play politics from neighboring sanctuaries.¹⁶ Given the "degenerate" but *realpolitik* notion of national security, any threat or challenge (actual or imagined) to these personal rulers and their cabals of partisan, ethnic, or tribal beneficiaries triggers a security and legitimacy desperation sufficient to provoke the full scale coercive powers of

¹⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York: Random House, 1979, p.166.

¹⁶ William I. Zartman, "Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse," in William Zartman ed., *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995, p.9.

the state. Without doubt, the fierce and quickly succeeding armed challenge to the Liberian demagogue, inevitably signaled an eminent danger to ECOWAS leaders, whom Charles Taylor had occasion to describe as a “club of dictators”.

In these circumstances, I argue that what began as a rebel insurrection against Doe’s unrelenting dictatorship was perceived, and rightly so, by ECOWAS leaders as a matter of far wider strategic implications than a simple Liberian headache. For the numerous security-conscious and legitimacy-craving dictatorships within the sub-region, the insurgency represented a festering cancer which they could not afford to leave unmanaged. Specifically, I argue that the principal backers of ECOMOG such as Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone perceived an armed NPFL ascendancy to power in Liberia as a threat to the survival of their own regimes. Consequently they united to balance “the development of such a hostile force.” Importantly the pro-ECOMOG regimes sought by their intervention to preempt the entrenchment of what they perceived as a hostile force, and to influence the trends in Liberia to ensure that the outcome is a regime favorably disposed to themselves. I will contend that this objective of intervention is reflected by the ironical acknowledgment of Charles Taylor rebel leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), after years of bitter fighting against ECOMOG, that ECOMOG’s intervention was motivated by a genuine fraternal desire to see peace restored to Liberia and his apology for his initial hostility to the force.¹⁷

On the other hand, Cote d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso bandwagoned by allying with the NPFL, the source of the threat by providing military, logistics, communications and other support to the rebels. Their pro- NPFL stances were further demonstrated by open condemnation and opposition to ECOMOG shown by Captain Blaise Campaore, the Burkinabe leader. The Ivorian leader, President Houphouet Boigny on the other hand resorted to the more subtle but effective use of the covert assistance and application of leverage to reinforce the Francophone opposition to ECOMOG and undermine international legitimacy and support.

¹⁷ “Breaking the Ice,” *West Africa*, June 12-18, 1995, p. 920.

Given the security implications of the conflict, when it became obvious that neither the UN nor the U.S. was disposed to a direct intervention in what had become a full scale brutal factional war, West African leaders were left with no option than to resort to self help.¹⁸ In theory, “the distribution of the perception of a external threat within the alliance is important in that if some members of the alliance perceive greater amounts of threats than others, the cohesion of the group will erode.”¹⁹ Simply put, this implies that states which are more prone to the threat will be at a greater national security risk and consequently will be more likely to demonstrate commitment to an alliance against such a threat.

It will be my contention that the major obstacle to a threat consensus in Africa in general, and West Africa in particular is the Francophone-Anglophone colonial legacy. This because while Francophone Africa states are structurally dependent of French paternalism for their stability, regime legitimacy and national security, their Anglophone neighbors have to depend on themselves or an increasingly insensitive international community. I shall demonstrate later that alliance cohesion is a direct function of the threat perception of the various sub-regional regimes or governments. I also explain how the relative changes in the status of the some Community states vis-à-vis the potential or actual threat of Charles Taylor and his NPFL, affected the threat perception of these regimes and consequently their role in ECOMOG. However, to put the theoretical plausibility of the threat hypothesis in perspective, I shall now proceed to examine the alternative explanation advanced by West African leaders, which I have already described as the humanitarian concerns hypothesis.

¹⁸ Reed Kramer, “Liberia: Casualty of the Cold War’s End?,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, Africa Notes, No. 174, July 1995, p.7. The author quotes State Department officials as indicating that the prevailing view in the U.S. Foreign Policy establishment was for the U.S. to stay out and the conflict left to Liberians to work out themselves.

¹⁹ A. Wolfers, “The Actors in International Politics” in W.T.R. Fox, ed., *Theoretical Aspects of International Relations*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, pp. 83-106.

D. HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS: A “NEW” HYPOTHESIS, A MASK OR REALITY?

The concept of humanitarian intervention has a dated history. Incidents of intervention under this generic description, however, appear to have gained even greater currency following the end of the Cold War and the high wave of international awareness due to an increasingly diversified media activity—the “CNN factor.” This increasing awareness and sensitivity about the victims of civil wars, interstate conflict, authoritarian regimes, droughts, famines and human rights abuses have accounted for the preponderance of incidents of humanitarian interventions.

It has been argued that an imposition of a refugee burden on neighboring states grounds a right both in customary international law and under Chapter VII of the UN Charter of intervention and/or enforcement action not subject to the limits of purely humanitarian intervention.²⁰ The threat to peace and security is grounds for invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which overrides the claim to sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction. Luise Druke argues that in respect of internal or domestic conflict that cause massive flows of refugees, “there is an emerging consensus on the legitimacy of taking action in the country of origin so that people would not have to flee.”²¹

Yewdall Jennings has argued that traditional doctrines do not provide a legal basis for action against a state that generates refugees. However, he acknowledges that general and customary international law is relevant to the consideration of the legality or otherwise of the conduct of a state which creates a refugee crisis.²² On the other hand, Dowty and Loescher argue that recent trends in international opinion tends to favor a broader definition of state responsibility, which includes the prevention of harm to others. The UN commissioned “New Flows” group declared that “averting massive flows of refugees is a matter of serious concern to the international community as a whole and that

²⁰ Dowty and Loescher, “Refugee Flows As Grounds for International Action,” *International Security*, Summer, 1996, Vol 21, no., 1, p. 45.

²¹ Luise Druke, *Preventive Action for Refugee Producing Situations*, Frankfurt; Peter Lang, 1990, p.209.

²² Yewdall Jennings, “Some International Law Aspects of the Refugee Question,” *British Yearbook of International Law*, vol. 20939, p. 110. Also see Dowty and Loescher, p.53.

such flows carry adverse consequences for the economies of the countries of origin and entire region, thus endangering international peace and security.”²³

Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar contend that “As global concern for humanitarian issues increases, ‘the balance between sovereignty and suffering is shifting in favor of greater international sensitivity to the claims of those who suffer’ and greater impatience with the obstructionism of uncaring governments.”²⁴ However, the most decisive statement in the debate of the balance between sovereignty and the limits of intervention may be attributed to the former UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In rather precise, concise, and direct language he wrote in his *Agenda for Peace* that “The time of absolute and exclusive sovereigntyhas passed; it is theory and was never matched by reality.”²⁵ Thomas Weiss and Larry Minear wrote that “The world is poised between the Cold War and an embryonic new humanitarian order.in which life threatening suffering and human rights abuses become legitimate international concerns irrespective of where they take place.”²⁶

1. Concern for Refugees

As the military stalemate continued, non-combatants, women, children, and nationals of other West African states became the indiscriminate and defenseless targets of all the factions in the Liberian civil war. By May 1990, West Africa and the international community as a whole were overwhelmed by the news of the cold-blooded massacre of civilians who had sought refuge in the Lutheran Church and diplomatic premises across Monrovia. In addition, hundreds of thousands of refugees flooded neighboring countries.

²³ UN Doc. A/41/324, May 13, 1986, paragraph 63.

²⁴ Terrence Lyons and Ahmed Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention and Strategies for Political Reconstruction*, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995, p. 2.

²⁵ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, “Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping, *An Agenda for Peace*, New York: United Nations, 1992, p. 9.

²⁶ Thomas L. Weiss and Larry Minear, “Preface,” in Thomas L. Weiss and Larry Minear eds., *Humanitarianism Across Borders: Sustaining Civilians in Times of War*, Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 1993, p. vii.

The social and cultural impact of refugee movements often threaten inter-communal harmony and undermine major societal values by altering the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic composition of host populations.²⁷ These consequences are even more dire in the context of the ethnic diversities of West African states and populations. In countries with racial, ethnic, religious, or other divisions, a refugee influx can place a potentially disrupting strain on the system. In addition, mass influxes of the kind witnessed across West Africa can endanger the social and economic stability, particularly in countries where ethnic rivalries may be virulent, where the central government is weak, and where the consensus on the legitimacy of the political system is lacking and where essential resources are limited.²⁸

I argue that the arbitrary boundaries of West African states and the resulting structure of ethnic, cultural or tribal distribution make refugee influxes more of a classical security issue than a humanitarian issue. Consequently, security concerns of the host country begin with the question of whether it can physically control the refugee population, which frequently includes armed combatants, dissidents, exiles, etc. For example, Hutu refugees in Zaire included many perpetrators of the “machete genocide” in Rwanda. Similarly, Liberian refugees fleeing into neighboring countries included members of Doe’s embattled AFL, most of whom had previously engaged in politically motivated massacres and other gross violations of human rights of Doe’s political opponents. The subsequent remobilization of some of these exiles into rebel factions from neighboring Sierra Leon and Guinea speak to the fact of how much of a source of instability refugees can possibly be. In addition to these, there were also present in neighboring countries Liberian exiles and opposition elements who had earlier escaped Doe’s tyranny. The very confrontation of these exiles with their previous persecutors may itself be a ready recipe for an extension of the civil war into a refugee camp or the host state.

Hence, I contend that a distinction may be made between what has been characterized as soft humanitarian intervention by “do gooders” and a more strategic type

²⁷ Dowty and Loescher, “Refugee Flows and Grounds for International Action,” pp. 43- 46.

of intervention by state actors who may be motivated by specific strategic concerns arising out of developments which also constitute a humanitarian crises. In the latter scenarios humanitarian concerns are at best secondary considerations, with issues of regime survival taking precedence. I argue that by May 1990, some ECOWAS governments could no longer afford to ignore the slaughterhouse into which Liberia had degenerated at the hands of savage and barbaric warring factions. However this was due more to self interest than to any pretenses of fraternity and charity.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 4, 8.

III. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: 1822-1989

Liberia is the oldest republic in Sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to its degeneration into civil war, Liberia was by all standards the United States' strongest ally in Sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, it was the largest recipient of U.S. economic aid and military assistance in the region. In this Chapter I will attempt to situate the Liberian civil in its historical context in order to clarify some of the social, political and economic dynamics of the conflict. In so doing, I argue that the insurgency and ultimately the factional fighting that engulfed Liberia was a product of the structural divisions, discriminations, exclusions and animosities that characterized the very foundations of the Liberian society. In particular, I contend that in the absence of any fundamental and radical reform, coupled with the absence of a paternalistic U.S. military protection, conflict was inevitable. Significantly, most other West African states share in such flawed statecraft and as such are characterized by similar political dynamics. An in-depth understanding of the background and political structural sources of the Liberian crises will facilitate an appreciation of the reasons why sub-regional states with similar backgrounds perceived the Liberia crises as a remote challenge to their own stability and the legitimacy of their regimes.

A. THE BLACK REPUBLIC: THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY (ACS) OR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT?

The extensive and long-standing relationship since 1816 between Liberia and the U.S. is very much a product of Liberia's history. This is because the first settlers to reach Liberia's shores were freed American slaves, and "free persons of color" under the sponsorship of the ACS, on board a U.S. Navy ship. This resettlement project was supported with funds from the U.S. Treasury.²⁹ This "black colony was administered by white agents until 1841, when the last administrator, Thomas Buchanan, brother of the

²⁹ Kramer, "Liberia: A Casualty of the Cold War's End ?" p. 2.

U.S. President, died in office.”³⁰ Non-white occupants of the office included Joseph Jenkin Roberts, who succeeded Governor Buchanan in 1841. Indeed, from the inception of the settlement until about 1828, the colonial agent commanded considerable access to funds set aside by the U.S. Congress under the Slave Trade Act of 1819.³¹

Liberia, from all indications, was a mere territorial extension of the United States. This is the historical background which produced a Liberian constitution, political, judicial, and administrative systems; even its flag, towns, counties, etc., were virtually American place names or mere versions of American forms.³² However, in the 1840s, Liberia faced external threats from aggressive French African territorial aggrandizement and Great Britain, which declined to recognize Liberia’s sovereignty. The Board of Governors of the ACS resolved in 1846 that the time had arrived when it was expedient for the people of the commonwealth of Liberia to take into their own hands the whole work of self-government, including the management of foreign relations.³³ Left without options, the colonists accepted independence. Significantly, formal independence was “imposed” on the colonists. Some have argued that up to the dawn of the civil conflict Liberia was never an independent country. However, it is also a historical fact that the U.S. Congress declined persuasions to formally adopt Liberia as a colony.

Some schools of thought argue that the U.S. was compelled by the demands of sovereignty to enable the settlers to break formal ties with the ACS. Great Britain regarded the ACS as an association of private persons who were not competent in international law to demand and exact taxes from British traders. Independence and sovereignty were therefore necessary to change Liberia’s status in international law from that of a private venture to an independent state.³⁴ But the question remains to be answered of whether, given the processes and pedigree persons that established and

³⁰ Martin Lowukopf, *Politics in Liberia*, Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1976, p. 17.

³¹ Ibid., p. 18.

³² Harold D. Nelson, ed., *Liberia: A Country Study*, Washington: The American University Press, 1984, p. xxiii.

³³ Ibid., p. 19.

³⁴ Ibid.

administered the settlement, Liberia did not bear the unmistakable mark of an indirect act of the U.S. government.

The debate as to whether or not Liberia was at the very least a *de facto* colony of the U.S. is not a mere transcends academic discussion into the realm of policy. It has been raised during past and present policy debates as to what levels of involvement the U.S. should maintain in resolving the Liberian civil war. The contention that Liberia was a *defacto* U.S. colony was in issue during recent Hearings before the U.S. Senate sub-Committee on African Affairs. While Senator Donald M. Payne, New Jersey argued that the crises in Liberia was the responsibility of the U.S. because Liberia was to all intents and purposes a U.S. colony, Senator Victor O. Fraser, Virgin Islands (Ind.) vehemently protested any such inference.³⁵

Whatever the merits of this argument the reality that cannot be ignored is that the historical relationship engineered and produced a geographically distant community (Liberia) with a profound structural dependency on the U.S. This structure evolved governments which tended to depend on the United States for their legitimacy. Consequently, Liberia's leaders before and including Doe adopted policies and practices that excluded, discriminated, and victimized larger sections of the society. As a result Liberia has always been a nation divided against itself with populations which were never integrated into a national identity or given reasonable access to economic and political opportunities.

B. THE AMERICO-LIBERIAN HEGEMONY: THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT

However, the enthusiasm with which the "True Whig" hegemony, the Americo-Liberian political elite, who ruled for 150 years, stepped into the seat of government bore no evidence of any reluctance to inherit the privileges of political domination from the white administrators of the U.S. government and the ACS. Prior to this, "early distinctions were made by the settlers between themselves, and the 'natives', as they

called the indigenous people.”³⁶ Within the ranks of the Americo-Liberians, a small number of *mulattos*, usually light skinned Americo-Liberians, mainly from Virginia and Maryland, formed an elite group distinguished by their “means” to education. The *mulattos*, became the prominent social and economic class and collaborated with U.S.-based business interests to effectively dominate the Liberian economy and commerce.³⁷ This socio-economic domination engineered a political equation that entrenched their domination of the political leadership of Liberia from 1841-1981.

The Americo-Liberian hegemony tended to be domineering, insensitive and disregarding of whatever may have been the stake of the indigenous population in this so-called Black Republic. Significantly, this discrimination and exclusion was institutional and systemic. The Liberian Declaration of Independence affirmed as follows: “We the people of Liberia were originally inhabitants of the United States of North America.”³⁸ Manifestly, not even the most generous construction of this phraseology could bring native Liberians within the contemplation of this declaration.

This paradox of a land of freedom for blacks and persons of color, who were suffering persecution, rejection, and exclusion from America’s melting pot, was even further confounded by similar constitutional exclusions of the natives. Native or indigenous Liberians were already officially designated as *aborigines* and the 1847 Constitution alluded to them as such.³⁹ Article 5, section 12 of the Constitution, for instance, stated that “no person shall be entitled to hold real estate in the republic unless he be a citizen of the same.” Section 13 of the same Article originally provided that, “the great object for forming these colonies being to provide a home for the disposed and oppressed children of Africa, and to regenerate and enlighten the benighted continent, none but Negroes or persons of color shall be admitted to citizenship of this republic.”⁴⁰

³⁵ *House Committee on International Relations, Sub-Committee on Africa, 10th Congress, Second Session, May 8, 1996, p. 15.*

³⁶ Liebenow, *Liberia, The Quest for Democracy*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987, p.18.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Consequently, indigenous Liberians were constitutionally excluded from citizenship of the republic, and deriving from that was an exclusion from owning landed property.

Meanwhile, the indigenous Liberians were tasked freely of their labor for road construction, as well as compelled to pay taxes to an alien government of a republic of which they were not citizens. This fraudulent beginning persisted until the threat of European incursions into Liberia's hinterland compelled President Arthur Barclay to extend citizenship to the tribal residents of the interior as prove of "effectiveness" of Liberia's claim to the districts adjacent to Sierra Leone.⁴¹ One cannot overemphasize the fact that the extension of citizenship to native Liberians was motivated more by the anxieties of the settlers to wrestle territory from British and French colonial aggrandizement, than by the inequities of the system or a policy to integrate their African hosts into a national identity. Consequently, this constitutional change, even though important, did not bring any real change to circumstances of the natives. As such, native Liberians continued to be marginalized and exploited as slave style labor, a practice which eventually incriminated Liberia in the Fernando Po crises.⁴²

These were some of the fundamental structural social, political and economic inequalities which underlie the divisions and animosities which poisoned Liberian society and sowed the seeds of a society destined to be in arms against itself. This is reflected in Gustav Liebenow's apt subtitle of Chapter IV of his book "The Seeds of Discord." Except for a few belated cosmetic reforms, no serious attempt has ever been made by Liberia's leadership to overcome these structural deficiencies towards the integration Liberian society. George E.S. Boley commented that "in the First Liberian Republic despite the constitutional guarantees of freedom, justice and equality, a native or an aboriginal Liberian was considered inferior to an Americo-Liberian by reason of his alleged *heathenism*; similarly a native Librarian was not considered a full citizen unless he was, by the standard of the settlers, completely detribalized or *civilized*, a concept beyond the grasp of a tribesmen in the same manner that is difficult for a westerner to

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 47.

⁴² Ibid., 57.

appreciate fully the significance of some African tribal customs.”⁴³ As one opinion put it, “It was ironic that in their social separateness, in the assumptions that they made about native Africans, and in the manner in which they sought to impose their authority, the Americo-Liberians were, at least until the 1940s, uncomfortably similar to white minorities that dominated colonial territories elsewhere in Africa”⁴⁴ Worse still, some of the stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminations, that characterized the attitudes of the settlers towards the natives smacked very much of the kind of racism and bigotry that informed the rejection of these same settlers by white American society.

These dynamics underlay the ascendancy of Liberia’s True Whig Party and guaranteed and entrenched the minority Americo-Liberian domination of Liberia’s political, economic, and social life to the absolute exclusion of the majority native Liberians. Even though some efforts were made over the period at political, economic, and social reform, these were at best superficial and far short of the revolutionary measures that it would take to accomplish any meaningful integration. As such, the Americo-Liberian hegemony became so entrenched and effectively monopolized all power in such a way that by the time of the presidency of Richard William Tolbert (1971-1980), Liberia’s leadership still remained a “closely knit oligarchy.” The “upper levels of government and the economy were still controlled by about a dozen interrelated Americo-Liberian families.”⁴⁵ The Masonic Order, which emerged around 1851, rapidly became a symbol of Americo-Liberian solidarity, and offered a forum for economic and political power trafficking and social stratification.

Whilst adopting political party structures and forms similar to the U.S. and indeed calling the True Whig Party the Grand Old Party (GOP) with the elephant as its symbol, the Liberian party political landscape differed considerably in its content. The leadership of the GOP paralleled that of the Masonic Order Personal wealth became a function of involvement in politics rather than entrepreneurship. Corruption among the

⁴³ G.E. Saigbe Boley, *Liberia: The Rise and Fall of the First Republic*, New York: St. Martin Press, 1983, p. 28.

⁴⁴ Nelson, *Liberia, A Country Study*, p. 25.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

political elite was the norm, while poverty and destitution became the legacy of the majority of indigenous Liberians. Eventually, opposition to the political establishment began to emerge, organize, and heighten. The masses and students, mainly dispossessed and bitter native Liberians, became increasingly restive, and a desperate Tolbert regime was put on the defensive as reform-minded elements of the True Whig party contested with status quo oriented hard-liners and the old guard.⁴⁶

In the obvious turmoil that loomed in Liberia, few people seriously foresaw the military as a force that could wrestle power from the Americo-Liberian aristocracy. Although military coups had long become an African political phenomenon, most politicians, journalists and academics continued to hold the post-colonial military in very low esteem. At the very best, anyone who factored the military into the political equation, especially in Liberia, might only go as far as placing his bet on the officer corps. Significantly, the division between officers and enlisted ranks very neatly paralleled the settler and tribal cleavages within the wider society.⁴⁷ The officer corps, which was mainly Americo-Liberian, was highly politicized because admission was primarily by co-option or patronage. The elite sought to control the enlisted ranks through ethnic stereotyping and segregation; the Loma, the Bassa, the Kpelle, the Kru, and others were assumed to possess cultural traits which made them best suited for specific roles as fighters, cooks, carriers, clerks, etc.⁴⁸ The Krahn, of which then Master Sergeant Doe and many of his co-conspirators are members, were said to make excellent musicians.

C. DOE: REFORMER OR CATALYST OF CONFLICT?

[By the] ... morning of April 12, 1980, a successful coup d'état was staged in Monrovia by an unit of the National Guard loyal which was to a group of seventeen non-commissioned officers and other enlisted men who called themselves The Peoples Redemption Council (PRC) led by Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe. They entered the executive mansion, the

⁴⁶ Ibid. pp. 67-68.

⁴⁷ Liebenow, *Liberia, The Quest for Democracy*, p.178.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 181.

residence of the President, where they murdered Tolbert and 27 members of the President's guard.⁴⁹

Doe cited political oppression of the Tolbert regime, corruption, unemployment, discrimination and the high cost of living that burdened the poor as some of the reasons for the coup. The coup was greeted throughout the country with popular approval. Liebenow characterized the reactions to the coup as "exhilaration and trauma."⁵⁰ Acting as the chairman of the PRC, Doe ordered the Constitution suspended, banned political parties, and released all political prisoners detained by the True Whig Party. More precisely, political prisoners of the Tolbert regime were merely substituted in prison with the same operatives of the regime, and other people who were not sympathetic to the coup and who were lucky not to have been executed. However, Doe pledged that the PRC would respect private property and reassured foreign-owned businesses that commitments previously made would be honored.⁵¹ Several hundred government officials, politicians and leaders of the True Whig Party were rounded up, summarily tried by a military tribunal and found guilty of the variety of offenses. Despite appeals by the Pope, the U.S. and the OAU for Clemency, Doe ordered their execution on April, 22nd before television cameras on the Monrovia beach.⁵²

Meanwhile, all powers of government were vested in the PRC, assisted by a cabinet of seventeen members chosen mainly from the Liberian opposition. The new rulers promised reform to reduce the social and economic hardships of ordinary

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 68.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 184.

⁵¹ Nelson, *Liberia, A Country Study*, p. 70.

⁵² Ibid., p. 70. Also see Liebenow, *Liberia, The Quest for Democracy*, pp. 188-193.

Liberians, but without any indication of a commitment to return to civilian rule. According to Amos Sawyer, later President of the Liberia's Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU), the PRC vacillated between "a populist program of development" and "a retaliatory indigenous hegemony." However, in a rather short order, the only consistency that quickly emerged with the PRC was its increasing repressiveness, mismanagement, and the looting of society. Confronted with a declining popular support, Doe had quickly evolved a constituency of members of his Krahn ethnic group as the basis of internal support. Pandering to the Cold War sensitivities of the U.S., Doe held out himself as an enthusiastic anti-Communist and devout ally of the U.S, ready to do battle with Libya's Maummar Ghaddafi and the Soviets. Through such manipulations Doe guaranteed himself unprecedented cooperation and economic and military assistance from Washington.

1. The U.S.--A Friend or Foe?

Throughout the period preceding the fatal overthrow of the True Whig hegemony, U.S. policy towards Liberia vacillated between action and indifference. From 1946 to 1961, Liberia received \$41 million in assistance, while between 1962 to 1980, economic and military assistance is estimated at \$ 278 million. In per capita terms, Liberia hosted the largest Peace Corps contingent and received the greatest level of aid of any country on the entire Africa continent, with the exception of Egypt.⁵³ After the coup, the Carter

⁵³ Kramer, "Liberia: A Casualty of the Cold War's End?" p. 5.

administration approved an aid package which was said to be intended to enable the U.S. “to exercise influence in the course of events.”

In subsequent years, support by the Reagan administration escalated, especially after 1981, to \$402 million between 1981 and 1985 alone. Doe met with President Reagan in Washington and in 1982 and received his badly desired promise of continued U.S. backing. Before visiting Washington, Doe closed the Libyan Embassy in Monrovia, as Reagan had done in Washington, and ordered the reduction of the size of Soviet Embassy staff. A U.S. - Liberia mutual defense pact guaranteeing staging rights on 24 hour notice at Liberia’s seaports and airports for U.S. rapid deployment forces was agreed by Doe.⁵⁴ A season of direct and extensive cooperation reminiscent of the days of the American Colonization Society (ACS) was established under Doe.

Internally, the PRC itself had become dominated by Doe’s Khran ethnic group. Doe’s government become increasingly corrupt, repressive and unscrupulous with its critics. Ethnic infighting and splits had developed within the PRC. By October 1985, Doe had insidiously manipulated Liberia’s process of constitutional reform to guarantee himself a civilian presidency with an election vote of 50.9 %.

Attempted coups d’etat were a frequent phenomenon and Doe responded by surrounding himself with a Khran-dominated elite presidential guard which frequently unleashed savage and indiscriminate crackdowns against members of the Mano and Gio ethnic groups.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

Washington's reaction to Doe's election fraud was that "... it established a beginning, however imperfect."⁵⁵ According to reports in *The Washington Post* "officials of the National Security Council (NSA) and the CIA became determined to get tough with Libya, the most vulnerable of the terrorism-generating states," and Liberia proved strategic to this consideration. As such, despite Doe's repressiveness, corruption, and human rights record, Washington indulged him. Secretary of State George Schultz visited Liberia in 1987. Following General Accounting Office revelations of massive mismanagement of U.S. aid funds, Monrovia handed over the supervision of government spending to a team of experts of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1988.

By the day Doe grew increasingly repressive, dictatorial and intolerable of any form of dissent. Several coup plots and unsuccessful attempts against the regime were reported. Doe sent a stern warning to restive university students and professors, journalists, civil servants, politicians, etc., that he expected absolute discipline and responsible behavior on the part of every citizen. Dissenters received imprisonment or death by firing squad without due process.⁵⁶ Doe's ascendancy, the coup that was once greeted with hope and enthusiasm, had quickly taken the ordinary Liberian hostage as the population grew increasingly restive.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.

⁵⁶ Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*, p. 259.

2. The NPFL Rebel Challenge

Meanwhile, following a failed invasion by General Quiwonkpa, Doe resumed a campaign of systematic “cleansing” against the Mano and Gio tribes of Nimba county who he perceived supported the insurgency. The Nimba county was also believed to be the heart of the support of the Liberian Action Party, the party which was believed to be the true winner of the October 1985 election which Doe usurped. The indiscriminate atrocities, murders and destruction of Nimba villages by Doe’s Krahn-dominated elite presidential guard merely heightened anti-Doe sentiments, particularly among the Manos and Gios. Most other Liberians were generally incensed at an increasingly heavy handed and insensitive dictatorship.

It was therefore no coincidence that when Charles Taylor launched his insurgency on December 24, 1989, it was from the Nimba county. Taylor, variously described as “procurement clerk” or Minister of Liberia General Services Agency, was one of the numerous “fugitives” from Doe’s repression. He is alleged to have escaped from an American prison where he was awaiting extradition to Liberia, to stand trial on charges of embezzlement. Taylor subsequently recruited insurgents who are thought to have been mainly trained and armed by Libya with the assistance of Burkina Faso and Cote d’Ivoire. The reaction of Doe’s Khrahn-dominated army was to send reinforcements to the Nimba county. They indiscriminately attacked villages and murdered civilians, a development which merely catalyzed an already fermenting anti-Doe sentiment.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Bartholt and Jane Whitmore, “The Last Days of a Bloody Regime,” *Newsweek*, June 1990, p. 38. See also Lardner, “An African Tragedy,” *Africa Report*, November-December 1990, p. 34.

When the 13th Summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of state and Government convened in at Banjul from 28 May to 2 June, 1990, the fortunes of the warring factions had become obvious. The NPFL had annexed about 75% of Liberia's territory, but had already suffered its major setback following a split that occurred between rebel leader Charles Taylor and his military Commander, Prince Yormie Johnson. The latter broke away from Charles Taylor with a faction of fighters loyal to him and formed the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), declaring war against both Taylor and Doe. With the two rival rebel factions fighting each other and with each fighting AFL, the war had become multi-faceted in a siege for Monrovia, the seat of government. Ironically, President Doe sent a letter to the Summit apologizing for his inability to attend.

The Summit was characterized by an unprecedented enthusiasm for integration as one "regional strongman" after another called for integration, solidarity, sub-regional fraternity, etc. Indeed, Captain Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, the outgoing Chairman of ECOWAS, exhorted member states to "look beyond our limited national boundaries,"⁵⁸ and embrace the virtues of regional integration. The Burkinabe leader had been busy interfering with Liberia by facilitating supplies and communication lines to the NPFL. The consensus of the Banjul Summit was "the need for the sub-region to drop all pretenses and enhance ECOWAS' operations since Africa cannot afford to exist in a make believe situation immune to the radical changes taking place all over the world"⁵⁹

⁵⁸ "ECOWAS Summit Makes Landmark Decisions," *Contact, The Publication of ECOWAS*, vol. 2, no. 3, November 1990 p. 23.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

IV. THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS), THE SMC AND ECOMOG

The ECOWAS Treaty was signed in Lagos, Nigeria on 28 May 1975 by fifteen West African States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The Cape Verde Islands signed the treaty a year later, in 1977, to become the sixteenth member state.

The objectives of the Community were the promotion of cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity, particularly in the fields of industry, transport telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions. It also sought cooperation and development in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its peoples, increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members and contributing to the progress and development of the African continent.⁶⁰

The ECOWAS Treaty provided for the following basic institutional structure: the Authority of the Heads of State and Governments as the principal decision making body; the Council of Ministers as next in the hierarchy; the Executive Secretariat, headed by the Executive Secretary, who is appointed by the Authority; the ECOWAS Fund for mobilizing financial resources for Community projects; and a number of specialized and technical commissions to facilitate the functioning of the institutional arrangements.

In this chapter, I argue that because the membership of ECOWAS fell into the colonial Francophone (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo), Anglophone (The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone), and Luciphone (Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau) divide, it bequeathed to the community a profound legacy of colonial rivalry which was later to undermine and render stillborn the grandiose aspirations of its founding fathers. Further, I contend that a more active and interventionist neocolonial French policy, colonial cultural, linguistic, and structural

⁶⁰ *ECOWAS Treaty*, Article 1, 28 May 1975, Lagos, Nigeria.

economic political differences, coupled with weak and undeveloped economies and sub-regional rivalries combined to make the attainment of viable cooperation difficult, if not impossible.

A. ECOWAS : THE SEEDS OF SLUMBER (1975-1989)

By the mere timing of their independence, most West African states became victims of the divisive struggle for spheres of influence between the East and the West. Most newly independent states still tugged along even if grudgingly with their colonial masters, who quickly evolved various post-colonial frameworks, such as the British Commonwealth of Independent States and Frances' *La Communauté* to facilitate continuing influence and control. Moreover, almost all new states were manifestly reluctant and sensitive to compromising their newly gained independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity to regional, continental, or supra-national political or economic organizations. Consequently, after failed efforts to foster a continental political and economic union under the banner of Pan Africanism, and to some extent the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the idea of ECOWAS did not emerge until 1975.⁶¹ This climate of deep suspicion which characterized the signing of the ECOWAS Treaty made it a revolutionary gesture of great symbolic value.

Notwithstanding the grandiose and ambitious ideas, of its founders commitment to such a noble enterprise has been dismal. ECOWAS Summits have been mere talking shops, where member states have been quick to adopt decisions, resolutions and protocols, which often ended up unratified and far from implementation. This slumber was reflected by the Executive Secretary, Dr. Abass Bundu, in his choice of theme for the Summit Meetings of June 1989. In a remarkable address entitled "A Time for Implementation," Dr. Bundu "presented a picture of nonchalance, half-heartedness, and

⁶¹ "Stepping up Progress in the Community," *Contact, The Publication of ECOWAS*, No. 4, October, 1992, p. 6.

near neglect which have characterized the attitudes of most member states since 1975, the year the organization was established.”⁶²

1. Record of Inaction

The general apathy and passivity of member states was manifested in every aspect of community activity ranging from the accumulation of arrears arising from the non-payment of budgetary and capital contributions, non-repayment of loans, non-attendance or inadequate representation at ECOWAS meetings, non-ratification of protocols and conventions, failure to respond to community requests for information or technical assistance, etc.⁶³

Only Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria, and Togo, three out of 16 states could boast of making a consistent effort to pay their contributions regularly as of 1989. The outstanding arrears of contributions from member states to the Secretariat’s budget alone stands at nearly 17 million units of account (about 20 million U.S. dollars) as of March 31, 1989. This shortfall is estimated to represent about three times the size of the annual budget and as such conveys a rough picture of how well the Secretariat must have been operating. Significantly, two member states have been in arrears for 10 years, while none of the remaining 14 member states had fully liquidated their arrears. This state of apathy and non-commitment persisted even after the Chairman of ECOWAS, Sir Dawda Jawara, personally signed appeals to Community Heads of State and Ministers to wake up to their most basic obligations to the organization. Additionally, Dr. Bundu had to travel around the sub-region, holding direct discussions with Community Heads of State and governments to persuade them to honor their outstanding contributions, but to no avail.⁶⁴ Given its practically bankrupt financial standing, how could such a dismally coping organization contemplate a mission of the scale of ECOMOG in the absence of a compelling motivation?

⁶² “Special Report on ECOWAS: A Time for Implementation,” *Contact, The Publication of ECOWAS*, vol. 2, November 1, 1989, p. 4.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Yet another indication of inaction by ECOWAS was in relation to the ratification and implementation of community conventions and protocols. According to the Treaty, Community protocols and conventions come into force only after ratification by all members, or remain unbinding on member states until they have been ratified by that particular state, or until ratified by two thirds of the member states. Since 1978, the Authority has adopted and signed twenty-three Community conventions and protocols that need to be ratified by each member state. However, as of June 1989, only one had been ratified by all member states. Of the remaining twenty-two protocols, Nigeria and Togo ratified nineteen, while overall only ten protocols had been ratified by more than fifty percent of all the member states. Most member states had not ratified more than three of four protocols and no member state had ratified all the twenty-three instruments.⁶⁵ Consequently, if one measured commitment on the basis of protocol ratification, the reality seemed to be clearly that member states cannot even be said to be committed in principle to the deliberations and consensus of their meetings.

However, having catalogued its chronic lack of commitment and performance, it is important to acknowledge that within these constraints, ECOWAS has recorded its “widow’s might” in the slow drive towards regional integration. Most importantly, ECOWAS has been of invaluable symbolic importance.⁶⁶ It has also pursued the implementation of various telecommunication projects (described as INTEL COM 1 by some member states); the construction of the Trans-West African highways; the adoption and application of the ECOWAS Brown Card Scheme (common insurance) in member states; the establishment of the ECOWAS Computer Center in Lome; the disbursement of loans by the ECOWAS Fund to various regional projects in member states; and the construction of a permanent headquarters of the Community in Lome and Abuja.⁶⁷

After over twenty years of its existence, the attainment of the ECOWAS stated goal of the promotion of economic cooperation, trade and mutual development of the

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

⁶⁶ “Sir Dawda Jawara on Integration,” *Contact, The Publication of ECOWAS*, vol. 2 no. 3, November 1990, p. 17.

west Africa sub-region is still very much an elusive dream. Further, it was hoped that among other things, ECOWAS would provide a framework for transcending national pride, intra-state rivalries, animosities, and more importantly, the colonial hangovers that had resulted mainly from the cultural antipathies transposed from the British, French, and to a small extent the Portuguese during the colonial period.

B. THE SMC TO ECOMOG: SLUMBER TO ACTION

The pro-integration atmosphere of the May 1989 Summit was very conducive to the proposal by the Nigerian Leader, President Babangida, that an ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) be set up and tasked with mediating conflicts in the sub-region. He argued, and rightly so, that the need to guarantee security in the sub-region was prerequisite to the operations of ECOWAS, whose noble ideals were anchored on solidarity, unity, mutual trust and good neighborliness.⁶⁸ Given the role of Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso in the Taylor conspiracy, as well as the continued guarantee of supplies, lines of communications, logistics, and war munitions, one wonders whether these statements of sub-regional patriotism were veiled indictments of those who were by then known to be part of the conspiracy that had brought Liberia to the brink of total destruction. In short order, the SMC was already addressing the Liberia conflict.

The former Gambian President told me, "we all knew by now that Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire were involved in routing weapons from Libya to the NPFL. We knew that some of the NPFL had been trained by Libya, and they included dissidents from our countries."⁶⁹ Subsequently I found the most classical revelation yet of the motivations of West African leaders in the following words:

One aspect of the Liberian conflict of course is the involvement of sub regional citizens apart from Liberian citizens, mainly on the side of Charles Taylor. ...Well as you know there are training camps in Libya where dissidents from various West African countries have been trained.

⁶⁷ "ECOWAS Summit Makes Land Mark Decisions," *Contact, The Publication of ECOWAS*, vol. 2, no. 3, November 1990, p. 17.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁶⁹ Personal interview of the author with Sir Dawda Jawara, Former Gambian President, July 1997, London.

Over years they are there from The Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ghana and possibly Nigeria, and we have information that a good many of these are fighting on the side of Taylor. ...If Charles Taylor, with the support of what I may call mercenaries from the other countries for the sub-region, were to come into power by force, one can imagine the implications it would have for sub regional stability.⁷⁰

One cannot belabor the point given such a self-explanatory statement. Therefore, it should suffice to say that given the nature of the concern reflected in this statement, the object of regional leaders could not have been humanitarian. ECOMOG was intended to achieve the important task of routing Taylor's NPFL in order to ensure, as Gulick put it, that the developments within Liberia were not dangerous to ECOMOG member states.

1. Begging Questions?

The decision of ECOWAS to constitute the SMC raises some important questions. This is especially true because some member states, notably Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, subsequently denounced the ECOMOG as unlawful and unjust, the former doing so publicly. Others such as Togo, a member of the SMC, backed down on a promise to contribute troops to the force. Even though it can be argued that ECOWAS consists of sovereign states free to do business in the ways they deem preferable, the resort to the SMC appears more deliberate than otherwise.

Recourse has been made on certain occasions to Mediation Committees by the OAU. But why did ECOWAS leaders not resort to the mechanisms they have established for intervention in the context of the ECOWAS Treaty and relevant Protocols? This is important because of charges by Taylor's allies in and out of the sub-region that without an ECOWAS mandate ECOMOG is an unlawful and provocative intrusion into Liberia's internal affairs. The accusation that the SMC lacked an ECOWAS mandate and therefore that ECOMOG was illegal stemmed mainly from the membership of the SMC and the

⁷⁰ Kaye Whiteman, "Towards Peace in Liberia," *West Africa*, 26 November - 2 December 1990, p. 2894.

obscure nature of its mandate.⁷¹ These controversies and rifts within ECOWAS strengthened Taylor's diplomatic intransigence as well as his military confidence to the extent that he declared war against the peace enforcement force. He called ECOMOG "a band of foreign mercenaries brought in by Doe to kill Liberians."⁷²

Why did the proponents of the SMC not allude the ECOWAS protocols? An even more curious issue is the question of the membership of the SMC. Was it schemed or it was merely accidental? Why did the SMC subsequently invite Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone as automatic participants because of the presumed proximity to the conflict? Could it be that such an invitation was extended in the full knowledge that that Cote d'Ivoire was more likely to decline given its known complicity with Taylor? If this were the case, it is arguable that the scheme of ECOMOG was to end up with a membership that consisted of regimes with a shared perception of the regional security implications of the war in Liberia. In theory and practice, such a move is crucial to the prospects of alliance cohesion, especially as the cost of intervention in terms of lives, mobilization, and duration of engagement increases.

I argue that General Babangida and his allies had a clear perception of the potential threat to regional stability, in terms of triggering one insurgency after another. They recognized that if the war in Liberia were not checked, each of them could wake up only to find a hostile regime next door over which they had no leverage. Whether it was accidental or a product of cold calculations, one could credit the achievement of consensus on the formation of the SMC and the choice of its membership as an act of decisive strategic importance. Most importantly, working through the SMC reduced and simplified the range of opinions over which convergence or consensus would be sought. This approach also enabled ECOMOG members to circumvent the traditional sources of controversy and disagreement, the Francophone Anglophone divide. Subsequent attempts by the Francophone bandwagon to convene a meeting of the Authority was declined by

⁷¹ Peter de Costa, "Forces of Disunity," *West Africa*, 22-28 October, 1990, p. 2629, discusses attempts by the Ivorian leader to convene a full summit of ECOWAS heads of state in the expectation, that the full complement of the Authority would marginalize Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia and Sierra Leone into a minority, and consequently revoke the mandate of ECOMOG.

ECOWAS Chairman, Sir Dawda Jawara, and ECOMOG states flatly refused to attend. According to Sir Dawda, the Ivorian leader was so frustrated about ECOMOG that, “even though we had always been friends, and he referred to me as the second doyen, he refused to meet me unless I convened a meeting of the Authority.”⁷³

This was crucial because even though the outcome of the war in Liberia had implications for each and every member state of the community, the threat was much more severe to nations closest to the conflict. The cohesion one could expect within the alliance, in this case ECOWAS, and in particular ECOMOG, is a function of threat perception. This seems to be precisely why General Babangida contended that “any misunderstanding or conflicting signals from member states of ECOWAS are disagreements over procedural issues and not over the fundamental role of ECOWAS in Liberia.”⁷⁴ While there may have been consensus on the need to intervene or mediate in Liberia, the interpretation one would put on the scope and dynamics of such a mandate depends on the countries’ threat perception and need for stability.

It must be emphasized that proximity to the threat in this context is far more embracing than physical proximity. Countries that have weak national security capabilities and legitimacy crises such as The Gambia perceived the trends in Liberia as a threat to Banjul, even though located a considerable physical distance away. Others, such as the Ghanaian and Nigerian hegemon with demonstrated regime survival capabilities were nevertheless plagued with legitimacy crises and potential instability. They therefore saw the strategic security need to preempt the insurgency formula before it became an attractive precedent to West African dissidents and exiles. Of course Sierra Leone and Guinea fall into the category of states which are proximate both physically and in terms of other dynamics. Importantly, it is the parallel political, economic social and security dynamics of sub-regional regimes that creates a more or less similar national security, and regime stability concerns among West African leaders.

⁷² “Liberia, Taylor Declares War on ECOMOG,” *West Africa*, 10-16 September, 1990, p. 2452.

⁷³ Author’s personal interview with Sir Dawda, London, July 1997.

⁷⁴ President Babangida, “The Imperative Features of Nigerian Foreign Policy and the Liberian Crises,” *Contact, The Publication of ECOWAS*, vol. 2 no. 3, November 1990, p, 13.

V. MOTIVATIONS FOR INTERVENTION: HUMANITARIANISM VERSUS REALPOLITIK

A. HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS

West African leaders and policy makers have argued vigorously that sub-regional states were primarily motivated to form and deploy ECOMOG into Liberia by humanitarian concerns. The ECOWAS SMC in its final communiqué explained the rationale for ECOMOG as follows: "...presently, there is a government in Liberia which cannot govern and the contending factions which are holding the entire population as hostage, depriving them of food, health facilities and other necessities of life."⁷⁵ In a subsequent statement, ECOWAS was even more categorical about the principal motivation for ECOMOG. The statement emphasized the necessity for "stopping the senseless killings of innocent civilians, nationals and foreigners, and to help the Liberian people restore their democratic institutions."⁷⁶ Since then, various African leaders and policy makers have continued to trumpet the "noblesse," African fraternity, and good neighborliness that provoked the formation of ECOMOG.⁷⁷ In typical fashion, Ambassador Joseph Iroha, a Nigerian diplomat (who is said to have represented ECOWAS in Monrovia for several years after the war began) stated: "we could not understand how the U.S. government with its long-standing relationship with Liberia, could remain so aloof." West African states sent troops to stop the fratricidal killing, he said, because "we couldn't allow this sort of thing to continue."⁷⁸

Admittedly, by the time the multiple factions pitched each other in a fierce battle for Monrovia, Liberia had long descended below the abyss of the "Hobbesian jungle." It

⁷⁵ ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee, Banjul, Republic of Gambia, "Final Communiqué of First Session, Document 54/B/I August 7, 1990."

⁷⁶ C. Greenwood, "Is There a Right of Humanitarian Intervention?," *The World Today*, February, 1993, p.36. Also see UN Doc. S/21485, 10 August, 1990: "A Letter delivered by the Nigerian Delegation to the UN Secretary General," and published as a "Letter to the Security Council."

⁷⁷ Margaret A. Novicki, "Interview with Obed Asamoah: A New Role for ECOWAS," *Africa Report*, Dec. 1990, p. 17. Also see *The African Guardian* (Lagos), April 29, 1991, p. 13, which quotes comments by the former Nigerian Head of State, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida.

⁷⁸ Kramer, "Liberia: A Casualty of the Cold War's End?" p. 8.

is also a matter of fact that there were other ECOWAS nationals trapped in the fighting, as well as an influx of refugees across the sub-region. For instance, it is estimated that over half of Liberia's population of 2.6 million was displaced internally (the population of Monrovia grew from 600,000 to approximately one million at the peak of the fighting). Externally, Liberians who took refuge in neighboring countries were estimated at 600,000.⁷⁹ After all, even the U.S., President Doe's closest ally before the outbreak of the conflict, went in to rescue its own.

However, the fact that most of the criticism that ECOMOG has drawn resulted from the fact that its operations were not primarily directed at a humanitarian cause. This raises basic questions about the validity of this claim. ECOMOG did rescue ECOWAS nationals and even some Westerners who were trapped in the fighting. But were these incidental to their presence or it was the main focus of the intervention. What happened to West African diplomats who were caught up in Monrovia? Did they have to make their own way to safety, or they were ever rescued? Did ECOMOG's military operations target their missions and diplomatic premises where most of their citizens were concentrated or they were focused on other strategic objectives, such as blocking an NPFL rebel take over?

Without doubt, ECOMOG's extensive initial mandate alone far exceeds the scope of humanitarian intervention, however ambitious. In addition, their military operations pointed more to the strategic objective of a determined effort to stall and flush out the NPFL in particular. It seems to me rather curious and out rightly fantastic that a humanitarian force intervening in an internal conflict under the circumstances of ECOMOG, should declare from the onset and intention to help the Liberians restore their democratic institutions.

Even though ECOWAS did admit some strategic security concerns, these tended to be advanced as merely peripheral or secondary to their more supreme and high moral humanitarian persuasions. For example, former Nigerian military dictator, Gen. Babangida is quoted as saying that,

⁷⁹ United Nations Development Program, Monrovia, *Liberia, United Nations Assistance to Peace*

...Unless arrested the carnage in that country (Liberia) would have spilled over to neighboring countries, leading to external non-African intervention and thereby posing a security threat to us all. We therefore decided to send our troops to participate in this laudable peacekeeping mission. We have repeatedly declared that Nigeria has no territorial interest in that country or indeed any where outside our own border.⁸⁰

This statement, typifies the “double talk” and “ambivalence” that characterized most of the pretenses of sub-regional leaders. Even if it is granted that the motive for ECOMOG was to prevent the conflict from spilling over and thereby pre-empt the intervention of a non-African force which would constitute a security threat, the rationale would be strategic. In the Nigerian leader’s own logic, the threat of a spillage of the conflict and prospect of hostile foreign intervention was the ultimate motivation for ECOMOG. But what of Cote d’Ivoire which shares an extensive border with Liberia. Did Abidjan not care about a spillover? After all neither Nigeria, Guinea or the Gambia has a common border with Liberia.

The heart of my argument is that notwithstanding any important impact other factors or theories may have had on the decision of West African leaders to form ECOMOG, the single most significant motivation was the mutually perceived threat that the rebel victory in Liberia would pose to the political stability and legitimacy of their governments. This argument is not to suggest that the fear of the actual and potential consequences of a rebel military victory was the exclusive cause for ECOMOG. This contentions that ulterior strategic motive was the driving force may be better appreciated when the responses of ECOMOG states is viewed in contrast with the responses of their mainly Francophone neighbors. Indeed, the Liberian civil war, like most other complex social and political upheavals elicited multiple concerns. These obviously included a legitimate concern for the humanitarian catastrophe and brutish destruction of life and property that was unleashed by the warring factions on unarmed civilians, women, and children. Besides, I have already alluded to the unprecedented influx of refugees, a development which brought in its trail other economic, social, political, and security

Building and Rehabilitation Efforts, Doc/Rev/5, p.1 June, 21, 1994.

⁸⁰ *The African Guardian*, (Lagos), April 21, 1991, p. 13.

consequences.⁸¹ For these and other reasons outside the scope of this paper it is well beyond dispute that humanitarian considerations may have weighed to some extent on the minds of sub-regional leaders. However, I contend that on a scale of importance of all the factors that the principal actors of ECOWAS took into account, the most dominant concern was the security, stability, and the legitimacy of their own regimes. Indeed, in the absence of that motivation, humanitarian concerns alone would not have sufficed to precipitate the unprecedented sub-regional alliance that culminated into ECOMOG.

B. THE SMC'S HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS: RHETORIC OR REALITY?

The Banjul Summit of Heads of State and Government, at which the ECOWAS SMC was formed, called on the Liberian warring factions to observe a mandatory cease-fire. The Authority tasked the new SMC with the initiative of mediating a resolution to the conflict. Needless to say, no heed was paid to the “admonition” or “decree” of the Authority, the highest body of ECOWAS, to impose a cease-fire. Consequently, the First Session of the ECOWAS SMC in Banjul, 6-7 August, 1990 determined that

the failure of the warring parties to cease hostilities had led to the massive destruction of property and the massacre by all the parties of thousands of innocent civilians, including foreign nationals, women and children, some of whom sought sanctuary in churches, hospitals, diplomatic, missions, and under Red Cross protection, contrary to all recognized standards of civilized behavior. Worst still, there are corpses lying unburied in the streets of cities and towns which could lead to a serious outbreak of an epidemic. The civil war has also trapped thousands of foreign nationals, including ECOWAS citizens without any means of escape or protection.⁸²

As a result, the SMC resolved “...to assume their responsibility of ensuring that peace and stability is maintained within the sub-region and in the African continent as a

⁸¹ Alan Dowty and Gil Loescher, “Refugee Flows As Grounds for International Action,” *International Security*, Summer, 1996, Vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 47 & 48. The authors observe that Guinea and the Ivory Coast alone absorbed about 750,00 refugees, the latter without setting up a single camp.

⁸²“ Final Communiqué, Banjul, 6-7 August, 1990.” *Contact, The Publication of ECOWAS*, vol. 2, no. 3,, November 1990, p. 10.

whole.”⁸³ Although this rationale has been repeatedly emphasized by various African politicians and policy makers, the primary emphasis for ECOMOG has continuously been laid on humanitarian and fraternal concerns. For example, in his justification of the role of ECOMOG, Nigerian leader General Babangida lamented that “Our critics tend to ignore the appalling human catastrophe which the Liberian crisis has created for us in the Sub-Region.”⁸⁴ The Nigerian leader repeated the toll of massacres, destruction of property and invasion of sanctuaries, and queried whether Nigeria and other responsible countries in the sub-region should “stand by and watch the whole of Liberia turned into one mass graveyard?” Further, he argued that, “all we in Nigeria and the rest of West Africa need to concentrate upon is attaining a cease-fire, leading to a lasting peace and the consequent easing or ending of the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Liberia rather than aiming at scoring conflictual political points and exacerbating the crisis and agonies of all concerned.”⁸⁵

In respect of displaced persons, he alluded to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as having said that the problem of 660,000 refugees outside Liberia and another 500,000 inside Liberia make it one of the worst refugee situations the world was facing.

Because of the numerous vulnerabilities of most sub-regional governments, the unprecedented influx of refugees was an unsettling and unmanageable experience, especially in terms of its national security implications. Moreover, most sub-regional states had no previous experience of dealing with such huge numbers of refugees and so lacked any form of organizational or institutional framework for responding to such an influx. Consequently, Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire, for instance, are said to have absorbed over 750,000 refugees, the latter without establishing a single refugee camp.⁸⁶

The humanitarian justification of ECOMOG is supported by the contention of Stanley Hoffman, who argued that “there is no way of isolating oneself from the effects

⁸³ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸⁴ President Ibrahim Babangida, “The Imperative Features of Nigerian Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Liberia,” *Contact, The Publication of ECOWAS*, vol., 2, no. 3, November 1990, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

of gross violations abroad: they breed refugees, exiles and dissidents who come knocking at your door—and we must chose between bolting the doors, thus increasing the misery and violence outside, and opening them at some cost to our own well-being.”⁸⁷ Even though Hoffman was commenting on the dilemmas of responding to the international refugee crisis in general, his insights aptly illustrate some of the real choices that the war in Liberia imposed on sub-regional governments.

Even more frightening was the fact that the conflict, which began as a popular and welcome uprising against Doe’s unrelenting dictatorship, had lost this character. Most rival factions were consolidating along ethnic or tribal lines. In any case what began as a popular armed rebellion was discomfoting enough, given the striking parallels between Doe’s regime and most other sub-regional regimes.

C. REALPOLITIK RATIONALE FOR ECOMOG

Liberia was without doubt a humanitarian disaster and as such a legitimate case for intervention. However, the factual state of affairs in the civil war generated even deeper concerns. ECOMOG’s claim that it was motivated by humanitarian concerns and sub-regional fraternal sympathies is at best an explanation that may be easily marketable to gullible domestic populations and the international community. In my view, by mid-1990, the trends in the conflict had fully engaged the national security concerns of some sub-regional governments, particularly because of the precedent value of what was going on in Liberia, and the prospects that the fighting might spill over across the sub-region.

In addition, regional leaders were also concerned about the prospect of a hostile rebel regime of dubious credentials, which would also constitute a precedent. Further, there was the teeming outflow of refugees across the porous borders into neighboring countries, as well as the many non-combatants who were trapped in the fighting. These apprehensions were exacerbated by abundant intelligence, which suggested the involvement of dissidents and exiles from other West African states with the core of the

⁸⁶ Dowty and Loescher, p. 47.

⁸⁷ Stanley Hoffman, *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics*, ” Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991, p. 111.

NPFL.⁸⁸ Suspicions of the future intentions of the NPFL were further confounded by the manifestly hostile statements and actions of the NPFL directed at other sub-regional governments including armed attacks and looting of the embassies of Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, etc.⁸⁹ A large numbers of civilians, women and children, mostly nationals of countries who had sought shelter in their embassies, were taken hostage; many of them were killed and embassy property was looted and destroyed.⁹⁰ Moreover, the slaughter of civilians and non-combatants became selectively ethnic. Doe's Krahn-dominated presidential guard had earlier indiscriminately murdered Gio and Mano civilians, burning down entire villages for their perceived connivance and support of the NPFL.⁹¹ Doe's reaction was precipitated by previous tribal animosities following the dissent between Doe and his former ally, General Quiwonkpa, a Gio. The NPFL had long hit back with the indiscriminate killing of any member of Doe's Krahn ethnic group and the Mandingos, a commercial tribespeople who the NPFL accused of siding with the AFL by fingering alleged rebel sympathizers.⁹² Similarly, Prince Johnson's INPFL had become notorious for its ruthlessness against non-combatants. A striking peak of this anarchy was the mindless slaughter on July 30, 1990 of about 600 Gio and Mano civilians, women and children who had sought refuge in Saint Peter's Lutheran Church in Monrovia.⁹³

However, I contend that such fraternal sympathies, short of the more fundamental strategic concern for their own political stability and the legitimacy of their regimes, may have been inadequate to precipitate the deployment of ECOMOG. This more fundamental national security concern may have been imperative because most sub-regional regimes share the same political vulnerabilities as well as legitimacy challenges very now and again become potential issues of contention between incumbents and disgruntled or

⁸⁸ The former Gambian president, Sir Dawda Jawara emphasized in an interview with the author the presence of Gambian exiles in the High Command of Taylor's NPFL. Similarly, various confidential briefs to ECOMOG troops often alluded to this.

⁸⁹ "The Human Factor," *West Africa*, 3-9 September, 1990, p. 2391.

⁹⁰ Margaret Aderinsola Vogt, "The Involvement of ECOWAS in Liberian Peacekeeping," in Keller and Rothchild eds., *Africa in the New International Order*, p. 166.

⁹¹ "The Human Factor," p. 2391.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

oppressed interest groups within the various community states. Therefore, if the NPFL insurgency formula were permitted to crystallize without difficulty into a rule of political engagement many other political opponents may be induced to make recourse to insurgencies.

1. Cross-Border Activities of Refugees

The Liberian civil war itself is an example of the potential threat of the influx of refugees to national security, political stability and regime legitimacy. Significantly, the war was started through an insurgency by Liberian exiles, with the alleged assistance of other dissidents and exiles from the sub-region, the NPFL, who invaded Liberia from bases on the Ivorian-Liberian border.

Almost invariably, some elements within a refugee population tend to reorganize and launch attacks into their countries of origin in a bid to destabilize the regimes from which they are fleeing. For example, in 1981 it was some Liberian exiles who united to form the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) in Freetown, Sierra Leone. ULIMO then proceeded to join the war, operating initially from bases in Sierra Leone. ULIMO became a force to reckon with, dislodging the NPFL and capturing the important mineral-rich counties of Bomi and Grand Cape Mount. The movement eventually split into what became known as ULIMO-K, headed by Alhaji Kromah, and Mandingo-dominated, and ULIMO-J, headed by General Roosevelt Johnson and Krahn-dominated.

Since refugees often remain in or near border areas, the control of cross-border armed raids and other illegal activities such as terrorism and smuggling which are especially difficult to manage. This is especially true where governments are weak, corrupt and incompetent, and are barely able to exert authority and force beyond their capitals. These cross-border activities often lead to provocation, confrontations, and ultimately hostilities between governments, and in some cases, governments and rebel factions.

After the November 1985 failed coup by General Quiwonkpa, Doe's immediate move was to declare Liberia's borders with Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire as

permanently closed. This was to preempt external reinforcements from across the border. "The Liberian Secretary General to the Mano River Union was recalled while the level of hostile rhetoric between the leaders escalated."⁹⁴ This action created disagreements and tensions between the regimes in FreeTown, Conakry and Abidjan over aid to the insurgents. Similarly, there has been direct and indirect accusations against Ouagadougou, Abidjan and Conakry of complicity in the activities of the NPFL and ULIMO across shared borders.⁹⁵

For example, *West Africa* carried a report that a dissident force of over 1,000 Krahns and Mandingos had massed on the Guinea-Liberia border to restore Doe's people to predominance. The report alleged that former Doe Minister, Dr. Boima Fahnbulleh, who escaped to Freetown after being linked with Gen. Quiwonkpa's failed rebellion in 1985, had a private army ostensibly waiting for the right moment to enter the fray.⁹⁶ What is crucial here is that in the context of a civil war where intelligence is rudimentary and ethnic hostilities are intense, such rumors can lead to preemptive attacks against suspected governments and thus widen the war.

In fact, President Momoh of Sierra Leone, reacting to a threat by Taylor to raid and punish Sierra Leone for its role in ECOMOG, alluded to the prospect of the spread of the war when he said, "If even he sends his MIG 17s or 20s ... attacking Sierra Leone, from anywhere would amount to a declaration of war in five countries in the region as the ECOMOG thing is not just a Sierra Leone affair. Some ECOMOG countries border with Taylor's strongholds which makes easy incursions possible."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*, p. 301.

⁹⁵ "Regional Split," *West Africa*, 17-23 September, 1990, p. 2494, The Ivorian government in the Fraternite Martin denies accusations of its support for Charles Taylor. The Ivorian Communiqué said that its troops were stationed at the Liberian-Ivorian border for "defensive reasons," while the government's good relations with Charles Taylor arose from the rebel's appreciation of Cote d'Ivoire's humanitarian response to Liberian refugees. Also see "Dangers for ECOWAS," *West Africa*, 22-28 October, 1990, p. 2689, in which the editorial refers to widespread rumors about the presence of Burkinabe soldiers in the ranks of the NPFL, as well as news of the massing of new factions on the Guinean and Sierra Leone borders.

⁹⁶ "The Crazy Gang," *West Africa*, 8-14 October, 1990, p. 2618.

⁹⁷ "Momoh Lashes at Taylor," *West Africa*, 19-25 November, 1990, p. 2875.

Such statements illuminate the fundamental strategic motivations of ECOMOG. While President Momoh claims that Taylor should show gratitude to ECOMOG for assisting Liberia, Momoh is in reality defending his own strategic interests. ECOMOG intervened in the first place to preempt or address the apprehension of Momoh and other regional leaders that otherwise a hostile rebel regime in Monrovia would easily destabilize their countries and undermine their regimes. It is significant that a few years later Momoh's precise fears materialized in a coup against his regime.

Also, air strikes, raids and search and destroy missions across these borders pose the problem of dragging host countries into the conflict, and in some cases they offer a "legitimate" pretense for armed exiled groups to drag other host countries into the conflict. For example, ECOMOG conducted bombardments against what they perceived as NPFL bases in the Ivorian border town of Danane, as well as against bridges thought to be supply lines around the Liberia-Ivorian border. However, Abidjan contended that this was an act of provocation which targeted Ivorian civilian targets and led to losses of life and property. Any of these attacks could have escalated into an all out war, especially because an exchange of hostilities between ECOMOG and any non-ECOMOG state could trigger hostilities with all ECOMOG troop contributing states.

In yet other cases, refugee host countries themselves helped arm the refugee fighting groups as a weapon against the country of origin but then found themselves unable to control the consequences of doing so. These were the trends in parts of the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region of Eastern and Central Africa, etc.

If it were granted that ECOMOG was motivated by the humanitarian catastrophe, it might still be argued that the real motive for the intervention was the instability and burden on regional states rather than the mere concern for the victims of the catastrophe. Threats to regional stability, peace and security are caused not only by the flow of refugees, but more importantly by the developments or conditions that precipitated the refugee flows are in the first place.

2. The Composition of ECOMOG

As this brief overview of the internal social, political and in some cases economic structures shows, most ECOWAS member states have comparable internal political pressures and similar national security vulnerabilities. As such, at the critical time period when the decision to launch ECOMOG was reached, the line-up of pro-ECOMOG regimes raised begging questions as to their possible motivations.

President Babangida of Nigeria, Rawlings of Ghana, Lansana Conte of Guinea, and Momoh of Sierra Leone were all of the authoritarian creed of African leaders. Each of them came to power through a military coup, and without exception, each had a demonstrated a consistent record of self-perpetuation. Even though the Gambian President, Sir Dawda Jawara, is the singular exception, he is thought to have an even more distinguished record of having preserved his wield on political power since leading his country to independence in 1965. These common features which the principal actors of ECOMOG share with the beleaguered Doe may have exacerbated Taylor's suspicions of the motives of ECOMOG, a perception reflected in his reference to ECOMOG regimes as a club of dictators whose plan was to assist Doe, one of their kind.⁹⁸

Similarly, Max A. Sesay argues that ECOMOG was a move by corrupt , repressive and non-democratic and self-perpetuating regimes to save the military dictatorship of Doe from collapse.⁹⁹ I would agree with Sesay, but with the qualification that ECOMOG was not motivated by a desire to save Doe, but rather was a preemptive defense by similar regimes of their own political stability and the legitimacy which they perceived to be remotely threatened. Of course if the motive of ECOMOG bothered on the regimes being corrupt, undemocratic and self perpetuating one may legitimately contend that these credentials are by no means the monopoly of the SMC member states alone. Indeed, the accomplished veteran of the art of political self-perpetuation and regime preservation, President Houphouet Boigny was not part of this line-up. He was in fact opposed to ECOMOG. As I have already argued, this bothered on the fact that his national security and regime legitimacy was dependent more on France than on the

⁹⁸ Lardner, p. 15.

dynamics of sub-regional politics and security. Moreover, the Ivorian leaders' complicity with Taylor's insurgency undermined any possible threat that a successful rebel regime in Monrovia would otherwise have posed for regimes of his credentials.

3. Rescue of Doe or Self-Preservation?

In my view, the policy outcomes triggered by such legitimate and *realpolitik* concerns of ECOMOG were however largely misunderstood by the NPFL in particular. The initiation of ECOMOG in the political context I have already described was bound to be unwelcome by sub-regional players, such as Cote d'Ivoire and its Francophone bedmates. But principal players in the conflict itself, such as the NPFL, were to be expected to show even greater skepticism that ECOMOG was a grand ploy to restore Doe's hold on political power.¹⁰⁰

The extensive friendship between Nigeria's General Ibrahim Babangida and President Doe was an open secret within West Africa. Among other things,

...President Babangida had cultivated friendly ties with the Liberian dictator Samuel Doe. President Doe, for example, had seen to it that the University of Liberia bestowed an honorary degree upon the Nigerian leader, who in turn made a generous donation to what became the Babangida School of international Affairs. Nigeria played a major facilitating role in rescheduling 30 million dollars of Liberian debt with the African Development Bank and was reported to have supplied arms to the Doe regime.¹⁰¹

Given this background, Taylor, some sub-regional politicians, and political commentators fell prey to the tempting conclusion that "...because the mere suggestion of a Nigerian operation to rescue the embattled dictator could be expected to arouse antagonism, Nigeria chose to intervene in the civil strife through ECOWAS."¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Sesay, "Collective Security or Collective Disaster?" p. 205.

¹⁰⁰ *West Africa*, 17-23 September, 1990, p. 2494. Taylor and his spokesmen, notably Laveli Supuwood and Tom Wuweyo, continuously decried ECOMOG as a band of mercenaries brought in by Doe to kill Liberians.

¹⁰¹ Mortimer, "ECOMOG, Liberia, and Regional Security in West Africa," p. 151.

¹⁰² *Ibid*

But many would also argue that Nigeria's preoccupation appeared to transcend the desire to rescue Doe, and seemed to be rooted more in geostrategic security calculations than friendship or the even more popular explanation of sub-regional fraternity. This is because from a security conscious perspective the Liberian conflict constituted a direct challenge to the shaky political stability and spurious legitimacy of Lagos. Consequently, beyond the need to help a friend was the not too perceptible need to preempt the regional spread of what was from all indications an obnoxious precedent and to preserve the stability and legitimacy of some regional governments.

Moreover, the interpretation that ECOMOG was a conspiracy by sub-regional dictators to bail out an entrapped comrade is in my view not plausible in terms of the mandate of ECOMOG, even prior to its deployment. The SMC had already decided that Doe must be asked to leave. According to the Nigerian leader, "It was accepted that in the Liberian crisis Doe was a factor and that he constituted a problem and all of us were desirous for peace."¹⁰³ Why would West African leaders assume the prerogative of determining that Doe must leave? At the time ECOMOG intervened, it was clear that Doe was either going to have to flee or be forced out by either the NPFL or the INPFL. The question of Doe's departure is therefore a non-issue. It has even been argued that the intervention of ECOMOG prolonged the existence of Doe and prolonged the suffering of the Liberian people.¹⁰⁴

I argue that regional leaders had a more strategic goal of rescuing themselves by establishing an influence in the processes as to how the power vacuum in Liberia would get filled, under what circumstances, and by whom. The experience of West African politicians shows that having friendly sub-regional neighbors is a fundamental prerequisite for regime survival and legitimacy in the turbulent dynamics of African politics. As most recent African examples show, the sources of political instability and

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Mortimer, "ECOMOG, Liberia & Regional Security," p. 161. Some NPFL supporters argued that it was ECOMOG which intervened to create the stalemate that prolonged the war. Also see Peter da Costa, "Taylor Under Siege," *West Africa*, 15-21 October, 1990, p. 2652, on why the NPFL leader and his former ally, Prince, are reported trading charges on who was protracting the

legitimacy challenges emanate from internal or external sources, or a combination of both. Significantly the “Final Communiqué of the SMC” outlined the following as objectives of intervention: the observance and maintenance of a cease-fire, establishment of interim government, observance of the general and Presidential elections in Liberia, etc.¹⁰⁵ However, the suggestion of a rescue in terms of a “Marcos-styled” departure for Doe rather than a total defeat and death, can be hardly contested. Otherwise, there is no evidence in the conduct and or pronouncements of the members of the SMC to suggest a scheme to perpetuate Doe.

It would seem that Taylor’s obsession to ascend to Liberia’s presidency, the attainment of which was only forestalled by ECOMOG, appear to have clouded his strategic judgment. Otherwise, there were abundant subtle and direct indicators that the primary interest of pro-ECOMOG states was to ensure that they wielded an influence in the developments in Liberia in order to preempt the installation of a hostile and unpredictable regime next door. In other words, unless a particular sub-regional regime has alternative security guarantees it could not afford to be disinterested in the process of change in Liberia. Therefore, it should be of little surprise that the majority of passive regimes were of the Francophone extraction.

This cocktail of mutual suspicions and the effort to ensure political survival was further catalyzed by Taylor’s intransigence, unpredictability, and hostility towards ECOMOG even at stages when the leaders of ECOMOG were bending backwards to accommodate his inflexible posture. It would seem that Taylor was blinded by his ambition to be president at all costs and was urged on by allies (Burkina Faso, and in particular, Cote d’Ivoire) who had their own mixed motives. As a result, the NPFL failed to avail itself of earlier windows of opportunity to end the fighting without necessarily negotiating away Taylor’s proximity to power. There may also have been a mutual convergence of decidedly mixed motives in keeping the massacres going. This may have been a ploy to enable Taylor to effectively plunder the mineral and timber areas which

war. Taylor castigated ECOMOG as armed invaders, whom he accused of killing Liberian civilians.

¹⁰⁵ “Final Communiqué, ,Banjul 6-7 August 1990,” *Contact*, vol. 2, no. 3. November 1990, p. 11

had fallen to the NPFL before law and order was restored to Liberia. In addition, French business interests, which were actively engaged in these transactions and in the lucrative barter trade of diamonds and timber for weapons, had no desire in seeing the civil war brought to a close.

4. Sub-Regional Relationships

By the time the NPFL finally manifested itself as the dominant faction in the Liberian crisis, previous sub-regional trends had already shaped Taylor's relationship with key regimes and personalities within ECOWAS. For example, it was widely rumored that Taylor's initial attempt to solicit support for his plans to unseat Doe from Ghana had failed and consequently landed him in the "cooler" (a popular Ghanaian term for political imprisonment). One wonders what "hospitality" he might have received as a "guest of the state" given the phobia of the Rawlings regime for anything that went by the name dissident. As a result of the revolutionary background of the Rawlings regime, it generated every conceivable kind of refugees, exiles and dissidents. Various of these dissident groups had for many years made several unsuccessful armed attempts to destabilize the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), as the Rawlings dictatorship was called. Most of these incursions had been from neighboring states. Thus, sub-regional political dynamics had serious implications for the stability and legitimacy of the PNDC.

Significantly, on August 15-16 1989, Ghana hosted a seminar with Togo, Benin, and Nigeria "designed to promote close fraternal links with Ghana's immediate neighbors in particular and member states of ECOWAS in general."¹⁰⁶ This seminar was conveyed pursuant to the 1984 Quadripartite Agreements between these four countries. According to Dr. Obed Asamoah, Ghana's Foreign Minister, the Agreements were "born out of a mutual desire of the four contracting states to collectively seek ways and means of

¹⁰⁶ "Enlightenment Seminar on ECOWAS in Accra," *Contact, The Publication of ECOWAS*, vol. 2 no. 1, November, 1989, p. 24. The participating agencies at this seminar were the Ministries of Foreign Affairs Finance and Economic Planning, and Interior, the Inspector General of Police,

promoting peace, security and stability within the sub-region ... And to encourage efforts at regional development.”¹⁰⁷ Why were Burkina Faso and Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana’s immediate northern and eastern neighbors, who are equally members of the ECOWAS fraternity, neither part of the Quadripartite nor the Accra seminar? In the same manner that the crucial business of sub-regional regime alliances and concerns of mutual security was being couched in the rhetoric of fraternity, so did the promoters of ECOMOG seek to legitimize their intervention on the basis of fraternity and humanitarian concerns.

Taylor himself was former member and insider of the Doe dictatorship. He may have known better than to seek support from Nigeria, given the well-known friendship between Presidents Doe and Babangida.¹⁰⁸ However, the political dynamics of Africa are varied enough to create both friends and foes in one environment. Across Liberia’s western border was the octogenarian of African politics, President Houphouet Boigny of Cote d’Ivoire. He was acknowledged by both his enemies and admirers as an African statesman and politician of distinguished credentials, a qualification which earned him among his colleagues the title of “doyen” of African politics. By courtesy of French paternalism and a Machiavellian political orientation, President Houphouet Boigny maintained the one party rule of his Parti Democratique de Cote d’Ivoire (PDCI-Democratic Party of Cote d’Ivoire).¹⁰⁹ Houphouet is said to have disliked his comparatively “boyish” neighbor, President Doe, for a myriad of understandable reasons.

a. Houphouet Boigny and Doe

The most obvious was that the “vieux” or “sage” (old man), as Houphouet preferred to be called, was an ally of both Liberian Presidents Taubman and Tolbert. In the sharply divided terrain of post-independence African politics, Houphouet-Boigny

Customs Excise and Preventive Service, the Civil Defense Committee (a paramilitary organization set up by the PNDC, which is now defunct under the 1992 Constitution), etc.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Robert A. Mortimer, “ECOMOG, Liberia, and Regional Security in West Africa,” in Edmond G. Keller and Donald Rothchild, eds., *Africa in the New International Order, Rethinking State Sovereignty and Regional Security*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, Publishers, 1996, p. 151. I shall examine this relationship and its implications for ECOMOG shortly.

¹⁰⁹ Handloff, *Cote d’Ivoire: A Country Study*, p. 21.

shared Tubman's and Tolbert's views of Pan-Africanism, capitalism and relations with the West. Eventually, highly personalized links between Houphouet and Tolbert were forged with the marriage of the Liberian President's son , A. B. Tolbert to the niece (ward) of Houphouet Boigny. A joint Liberian -Ivorian commission on cooperation was established under Tolbert¹¹⁰

Even though there is some evidence of disagreement between Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia over access to America's coffee market, there is no suggestion anywhere that this affected the friendship between the two leaders. Consequently, Doe, who overthrew and executed Tolbert on the beaches of Monrovia in the full blitz of television cameras during the 1980 coup that brought him to power, could not have been a welcome neighbor.¹¹¹

Doe's bloody revolt against President Tolbert also represented an unpleasant reminder of what could befall these other leaders if their draconian domestic security apparatus were ever to fail. There could not be a more unwelcome precedent than Doe's PRC. Thus even though Houphouet Boigny may have learned to tolerate Doe, at least at a diplomatic level, the latter may have still remained an inherently unwelcome neighbor. This is due largely to the fact that the mixed nature of populations within the sub-region coupled with porous borders makes cross-border insurgencies and dissident activities a familiar occurrence.

Consequently, African regimes have a strong desire to be surrounded by friendly regimes which can be trusted not to harbor fleeing dissidents and political opponents. Throughout Africa, the existence of porous and arbitrary colonial borders have often led to a regular occurrence of cross-border incursions by dissident factions and rebel groups. The prevalence of loose borders and the national security problems they pose are compounded by the preponderance of weak states across the sub-region, most of which are barely capable of exerting a monopoly over force beyond their capitals and

¹¹⁰ Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*, p. 146.

¹¹¹ Mortimer, "ECOMOG, Liberia and Regional Security in West Africa," p.151. Mortimer also alludes to Bryon Tarr, "The ECOMOG Initiative in Liberia: A Liberian Perspective," *Journal of Opinion*, Issue 21, 1993, p.80.

major cities. This explains why most of the major rebel activities and successes were characterized by cross-border insurrections coupled with sustained covert and sometimes overt support by neighboring regimes.

For example, General Quiwonkpa's momentarily successful coup against Doe in November 1985 was launched from neighboring Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. According to Liebenow, "... General Quiwonkpa's forces were correctly perceived as having come from Sierra Leone where they had been recruited and trained. It was also charged that the Ivory Coast had been a source of rebels."¹¹² Similarly, it is significant to note that the rebel victories in the Chadian Civil War, the anarchy in the Lake Regions (Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire), and lately the Congo highlight the extent of this vulnerability.

To the extent that ECOMOG was an attempt to establish some kind of a rudimentary, regulated, and institutional framework that would enable ECOWAS states to balance against perceived threats to their regional stability and security, it was a credible strategic initiative. The alternative may have been the usual recourse to largely covert tactics of self-help, such as the bandwagoning already exemplified by the roles of Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. A classical example of this trend is what occurred in the Great Lake regions of East Africa and Southern Africa.

¹¹² Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*, p. 301.

VI. REGIME LEGITIMACY AND STABILITY AS A MOTIVE FOR INTERVENTION

The Liberian Civil War was crucial to the political stability of the West African sub-region and for that matter the stability of some of its regimes. This may be due to the more direct and inextricable link between political conflict, refugees and regional stability. The civil war *per se* was a potential threat to regional peace and stability because of its potential to spread beyond Liberia's borders. The prospect of a spillover of the violence was enhanced by the prevalence of fundamentally permissive conditions within the sub-region.

The peculiar circumstances of ECOMOG states imposed on some regional leaders more pressing strategic issues. A close reading of most of the things that have been said, written, and or done by West African leaders and policy makers are replete with clues and pointers to the strategic and more important preoccupation of ECOMOG. Their primary concern was the probable implications of the Liberian saga for their own political stability and the legitimacy of their regimes. The report of the SMC on the crisis acknowledges that the Liberian conflict had gone out of control and the violence led to a distressing and unnecessary loss of innocent lives and property. The government in Monrovia was no longer able to guarantee the security of Liberia's citizens and foreign nationals, including hundreds of thousands of ECOWAS citizens. Also, the stability of neighboring states was under threat as a result of the swarms of refugees fleeing the fighting. The journal *West Africa* reported President Babangida as explaining that "what probably motivated us was that we said at the last meeting we had at the ECOWAS Summit of May in Banjul, there was a government that had lost its credibility to govern and we had some warring factions that held the nation, the society and the people hostage. There was virtually a breakdown of everything in Liberia."¹¹³

¹¹³ "The Babangida Interview," *West Africa*, 1-7 October, 1990, p. 2578.

Over the years, African leaders have either bought off internal opposition or compelled compliance by resorting to the repressive and authoritarian use of the coercive apparatus of the state against all pockets of dissent and opposition. In addition, potential sources of instability (actual or imagined) are eliminated by draconian internal security measures. These tended to operate in such a swift fashion that it was becoming increasingly impossible to orchestrate subversions or coups internally without being tracked down.

Consequently, externally orchestrated insurgencies or insurrections have lately become the only viable option for groups contemplating armed confrontation. In such a security context, the principal actors in ECOMOG could not have been neutral, disinterested humanitarianist as the rhetoric of regional leaders has maintained. Therefore, the extent to which anarchy was prevailing in Liberia was a legitimate source of anxiety, especially for regimes which thrived under a shadow of questionable legitimacy and fermenting instability.

A. SOURCES OF ILLEGITIMACY AND STABILITY CONCERNS

The fact that the real motivations for ECOMOG were the concerns of regional leaders for their own stability and the legitimacy of their regimes is demonstrated by the fact that Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire were invited to participate in ECOMOG because, according to the SMC, "as neighboring countries they bore the brunt of the outflow of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing Liberia."¹⁴ While Guinea and Sierra Leone availed themselves of this invitation, Cote d'Ivoire declined. These different responses by geographically contiguous states reflects the political features of the sub-region and the national security postures of member states as I described.

The selective invitation merely reflects my theoretical contention that the alliance response or behavior of states is often a function of the threat perception, which in turn derives from a state's proximity to the threat. Consequently, alliance cohesion is likely to be stronger among states that are mutually proximate to the threat than those who

perceive themselves as far away from the consequence range. If the issue was fraternity or humanitarianism, all West African states would be equally eligible.

Being Liberia's immediate neighbors, these states fall into the category of direct proximity and as such, unless they are otherwise secured, they would be the most concerned about the destabilizing consequences. Such states are therefore more likely to be disposed to intervening to influence trends within Liberia so as to ensure that the developments inside Liberia would not become hostile to themselves. I suggest this is premised on naked self-interest of the states concerned.

This explanation by the SMC suggests the proposition that alliance motivation is a function of a particular state's refugee burden. Even if the most important concern of West African leaders was refugees, it is still plausible to contend that such a concern would be still motivated by calculations of their own national interests than a concern for refugees as such. Consequently, when there are more important and overriding strategic interests, a country's concern may not necessarily be reflected by its refugee burden.

The central strategic question seems to be whether or not a particular developments or sets of developments (which may or may not generate refugees) constitutes in its totality a threat to the political stability, security, and legitimacy of the regimes concerned. This is because threats of this nature are more fundamental since they raise issues of regime survival, or preservation, etc. This is the justification or explanation for the enthusiasm of countries such as Gambia, Nigeria, and Ghana who, even though remotely contiguous to Liberia (physically or geographically), were as committed to ECOMOG as Guinea, and Sierra Leone. Similarly, Cote d'Ivoire was committed to Liberia, but in a manner compatible with its own national interest and security calculations.

Further, the response of some of Liberia's immediate neighbors themselves seems to show that the strategic behavior of African regimes, especially in the realm of national security, legitimacy and regime preservation, involves many more variables than the

¹¹⁴ "The ECOWAS Mediation in the Liberian Crisis," *Contact, The Journal of ECOWAS*, November 1990, vol. 2, No. 3, p. 6.

express claims of the SMC suggests. Some reports estimated the influx of refugees into Guinea at 250,000, Cote d'Ivoire at 120,000 and Sierra Leone at 30,000.¹¹⁵

1. Sierra Leone: Momoh's Legitimacy and Security Crises

Contrary to the logic of ECOMOG's refugees burden argument, Sierra Leone joined the intervention to enforce peace in Liberia even though it suffered fewer refugees as compared with Cote d'Ivoire. On the other hand, Cote d'Ivoire, which was presumably suffering a greater refugee burden, was opposed to intervention. In fact, Cote d'Ivoire sought to undermine the intervention by providing support for the NPFL and using its leverage to undermine regional cohesion and international support for ECOMOG.

Beyond numbers of refugees and pretenses to sub-regional fraternity and humanitarianism, Momoh could see the "fire next door" as a prophecy of the "coming anarchy" and consequently the need to consolidate the survival of his own regime. Joining ECOMOG offered him the opportunity to intervene and preempt the Liberian war from becoming an instability multiplier within the sub-region.

The threat perception of some West African leaders was more a question of what similarities a particular sub-regional government shared with the Doe dictatorship so as to force a perception that the challenge to Doe was indirect in terms of a precedent of what could happen to others. If the answer was in the affirmative, then what antidotes would a particular regime have in the event of a threatening instability? In the first regard, there is generally no difference between sub-regional states, since they are mostly one species of dictatorship or another. Momoh's real motivation is illustrated by the fact that while intervening in Liberia militarily, he also commenced the most rigorous political reform in Sierra Leone in nearly 30 year of dictatorship.¹¹⁶ As an Anglophone in the post-Cold War era, Sierra Leone had no external guarantee of its political stability and regime legitimacy. Momoh had to deal with his own instabilities, and consequently ECOMOG offered a new collective arrangement within which he could accomplish regime survival.

¹¹⁵ "The Human Factor," *West Africa*, 3-9 Sept. 1990, p. 2390.

¹¹⁶ "Sierra Leone: Political Reforms," *West Africa*, 10-16 September, 1990, p.2454.

There were also too many similarities between the political dynamics of Momoh's hegemony in Sierra Leone and the Doe regime, such that Momoh could not afford to be indifferent about the internal developments within Liberia (whether or not there were refugees as a consequence). This is the sense in which ECOMOG was a rescue boat which some countries could not afford to miss, which led to the degree of unprecedented commitment and alliance cohesion from Sierra Leone. Steven Riley reflects these similarities as follows,

...Both states were poorly governed, with economies in steady decline. Despite human rights abuses and gross corruption, they were most peaceful. Their shaky systems of rule were backed up by small privilege standing armies and police forces. It was assumed that any threat to the established regimes had been bought off by patronage in Sierra Leone or crushed by Liberia's more repressive regime.¹¹⁷

Indeed, Captain Valentine Strasser, who overthrew Momoh's hegemony was himself an ECOMOG veteran. It is alleged among other things that after witnessing the deterioration of Liberia into anarchy, Strasser and his fellow ECOMOG veterans could not afford to see Momoh's regime drive Sierra Leone down the same path of chaos. This is arguably another variant of the precedent value of the Liberian conflict that ECOMOG was intended to preempt.

It is significant to note that like most coups in Africa, Strasser's was greeted with popular approval, the usual pointer to the deceptive and state managed pretenses that African dictators make to legitimacy. But even after his coup, Strasser's juvenile and populist junta, the National Provisional Ruling Council of Sierra Leone (NPRC), had to contend with a revamped Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in the waiting.

Even though the RUF, led by a former Sierra Leonean army photographer turned dissident, Foday Sankoh, predated the NPFL, there is no doubt that the former owed its new lease on life to Charles Taylor. Sankoh is said to bear a grudge against the Sierra Leonean government which imprisoned him for his alleged involvement in a failed coup d'état against Siaka Stephens' one party regime in 1969. Consequently, he formed the

¹¹⁷Steven P. Riley, *Liberia and Sierra Leone Anarchy and Peace in West Africa?* London: Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, 1996, p.1.

RUF which, until its complicity with the NPFL, waged a sporadic and feeble guerrilla war in Sierra Leone's diamond and mineral rich rural hinterland.¹¹⁸

Paul Richards argues that it was in Taylor's strategic interest to help the RUF escalate its revolutionary campaign in the Eastern region of Sierra Leone in March 1991. I argue further that within Sierra Leone the conditions for instability and the questions of legitimacy were already permissive, at least potentially. This is largely due to the fact that Sierra Leone, like Liberia or any other West African state, is potentially rich with agriculture and mineral resources.¹¹⁹ However, most of Sierra Leone's wealth was consumed by the urban-based political elite through extensive corruption, waste and patronage. The result is a dispossessed, resentful and alienated rural population who are eager recruits for a reinvigorated RUF. Characteristic of weak, unstable and illegitimate regimes, the ARFC as well as Momoh's dictatorship, were fast losing ground to a virtual NPFL plus RUF offensive.

According to Robert Mortimer, Taylor was seeking to punish Sierra Leone for its role in ECOMOG. The NPFL also wanted to undermine the alliance by creating domestic instabilities to keep the Sierra Leonean regime busy on its home turf.¹²⁰ He also argues that the NPFL offensive into Sierra Leone was to enable Taylor to crack down on pro-Doe soldiers who had fled across the border into Sierra Leone after the death of Doe.¹²¹ Significantly, this is evidence of the mutual or collective vulnerability of West African states and the underlying motivation for joining ECOMOG as a collective insurance against instabilities and legitimacy challenges.

B. NIGERIA: A LEGEND OF INSTABILITY AND ILLEGITIMACY

The feature of unstable and illegitimate dictatorships, at least at the time the decision to deploy ECOMOG was made, is fashionable among West African states. This creates profound similarities in the political dynamics and "fortunes" of sub-regional

¹¹⁸Paul Richards, "Rebellion in Sierra Leone and Liberia: A Crises of Youth," in O. Farley, ed., *Conflict in Africa*, London: Terrorist Academic Studies, 1995, p.140.

¹¹⁹ Riley, *Liberia and Sierra Leone Anarchy and Peace in West Africa*, p.6.

¹²⁰ Mortimer, "ECOMOG, Liberia & Regional Security," p. 151.

regimes. These common dynamics in the context of changing global security arrangements united them to form ECOMOG against what they perceived as a mutual threat to the legitimacy and stability.

1. Classic Praetorianism and Corruption

In thirty-seven years since independence in 1960, Nigeria's notoriety for unstable, corrupt, and illegitimate regimes is legend. Of the nine republics that Nigeria has celebrated, only two were civilian regimes, each of which ruled for very short periods. The army has directly ruled the country for more than 25 of its 35 years of independence and exerted powerful influence over policy making, even during the brief spells of civilian government. There have been seven successful military coups and countless failed ones.¹²²

Nigeria's immense human wealth and natural resources potential, which was enhanced by the discovery of crude oil, seems to have helped cultivate commensurate greed, corruption, and incompetence, especially among the country's political elite. Generally, military as well as civilian political elite have proved to be massively corrupt, unaccountable, and ineffective. Much of Nigeria's oil money was squandered on ill-suited projects or was stolen by corrupt officials, their patrons, cronies and families.¹²³

As in most of Africa, political power and wealth have become coterminous; whoever controls the state controls everything. Political influence is not only one means of enriching one's self, family and friends, it is the only way.¹²⁴ The plunder of the public resources by politicians and their cronies defies every sense of the concept of public service, public good, and accountability.

One of the high points of Nigeria's classical military hegemony has been the Babangida and Abacha eras. These regimes masterminded and sustained ECOMOG

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 152.

¹²² Kenneth B. Noble, "Nigeria's Ruler a Puzzle of his People," *New York Times*, July 7, 1993, p. A, 3.

¹²³ Julius O. Ihonvbere, *Nigeria, The Politics of Adjustment and Democracy*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1994, p. 47.

respectively. This period witnessed the emergence of “an organizational pattern in which corrupt senior military godfathers built and used networks of lower ranking clients.”¹²⁵ Consequently, “junior officers without a patron were unhappy with the system, but this was often due less to commitment to the national interest than personal jealousy and resentment of their exclusion.”¹²⁶ While Nigeria’s military and political elite are multi-millionaires, lower ranks are the victims of the harsh realities of the country’s economic downturn and institutionalized plundering of state resources.

Kent Hughes Butts and Steven Metz, argue that “Throughout Africa, statist economic policies, weak political institutions, and an internally fractured army composed of personal loyalty pyramids have led to military coups.”¹²⁷ Further, I argue that Africa’s entire population and civil society is characterized by structural deficiencies through the divide-and-rule tactics of colonial rule which post-independence African elite continue to exploit. In so doing, Africa’s elite have never taken seriously the more arduous but indispensable task of engineering integration and national identity. On the contrary, both civilian and military politicians have tended unduly and negatively to exploit tribal, ethnic and cultural differences of traditional societies. Consequently Africa’s diversity, strength and resourcefulness, is being made an obstacle to stability.

In terms of the absence of a political culture, institutional framework and attitudes to mitigate the conflict inducing potential of divisive, corrupt and exclusionary political practices, Nigeria is probably the most deficient country in Sub-Saharan Africa. As such, in spite of its experience of a bitter civil war, Nigeria’s political elite, seem intent on pushing Sub-Saharan Africa’s most populous and richest state to the brink of self-destruction rather than integration of its society.

As early as 1962, Henry Bretton sounded warnings of pessimism even as the structural, institutional and other frameworks of an independent Nigeria was being put

¹²⁴Larry Diamond, “Nigeria’s Perennial Struggle,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Fall 1991, p.79.

¹²⁵ *Africa Confidential*, September 27, 1991, p. 4.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷Kent Hughes Butts and Steven Metz, *Armies and Democracy in New Africa: Lessons for Nigeria and South Africa*, Pennsylvania :Strategic Studies Institute, January 9, 1996, p. 5.

together. He projected that given Nigeria's colonial institutional structures and divisions, there would be intensified internal pressures in relation to the struggle for power and for the rights and privileges associated with the positions of power and influence. Further, he argues that "because conditions are likely to become a permanent feature of Nigerian politics for the foreseeable future, it is of course to be expected that forces and factors tending to create, or work towards the creation of political instability will outweigh for some time to come, the stabilizing factors."¹²⁸

2. Diversity: A Strength or Weakness?

Nigeria's inherent instability has its roots in the pre-colonial social, political and economic structures and institutions, which were only reinforced and exacerbated during colonial rule to facilitate the exploitative objectives of British imperial policy. Through deliberate colonial expediencies, the existing divisions between the ethnically, politically, socially, culturally and linguistically distinct societies of present day Nigeria were pushed beyond limits of integration. By the end of the British conquest in 1903, when it amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria into the colony and protectorate of Nigeria in 1914, the territory was composed of about 250 to 400 ethnic groups (depending on how counting is done) of widely varied cultures and modes of political organizations.¹²⁹ The most outstanding features of modern society reflect the influence of regionally dominant ethnic groups such as the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the West, and the Igbo in the East.

The political, social, and cultural power structure of Northern Nigeria bears a mark of decisive influence of Islamic civilization. Before British colonial intrusion, there had developed quasi-oriental systems of despotism reminiscent of the great Sudanese empires. These systems showed sufficient social and political cohesiveness to ward off excessive European intervention in native affairs. The social discipline derived from

¹²⁸Henry L. Bretton, *Power and Stability in Nigeria, The Politics of Decolonization*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962, p. 5.

¹²⁹Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Nigeria, A Country Study*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992, p. 3.

Islam produced adequate stability and seemed to provide a more effective means of law enforcement and general administration than direct British intervention could have achieved at the time.¹³⁰ Indeed, Lord Harley observes that the larger political units in the north featured a well organized fiscal system, a definitive code of land tenure, a regular scheme of local rule, through appointment of local heads, and a trained judiciary administering the tenets of Muhammadan Law.¹³¹ Without significant modifications, the British merely acquiesced in the continuation of this feudal structure and thus made it an integral part of imperial rule which was dubiously called “indirect rule.”

Southern Nigeria, due to a different set of social and physical factors, produced varying power structures and diverse political processes and customs. The dense tropical forest and the tsetse fly, among other factors, appear to have served as a barrier to the southward march of Islam, at least for a time. Insulated from aggressive Islamic and other influences by its physical environment, southern society evolved into well organized and effective political units especially in the western region among the Yoruba and Edo.¹³²

Another impact of these geographic and social factors was the teeming urban concentration of people which resulted in political configurations. Murdock reports that states of considerable magnitude occur among the Edo, Igala, Igbir, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Nupe and all tribes of the Yoruba cluster, but elsewhere, political integration does not transcend the level of local community.¹³³ Following European contact, these southern sections were intensively subjected to a process of acculturation primarily through missionary and trading interactions. On the whole, tendencies towards the development of indigenous social and political stability were counteracted by agencies associated with colonial exploitation. British imperial policy was to make the power structure pliable to colonial intrusion and exploitation.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Bretton, *Power and Stability in Nigeria*, p. 10.

¹³¹ Lord Harley, *An African Survey*, (revised edition), London: Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 453.

¹³² James S. Coleman, *Nigerian Background Nationalism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958, p. 25.

¹³³ G. P. Murdock, *Africa; Its People; Their Culture and History*, New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1959, p. 248.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

The Eastern Regions experienced greater social fracturing than the North and South. This was also mainly due to geographical factors. The dense forest discouraged centralization and consequently led to the virtual absence of centralized indigenous political and administrative structures or empires comparable to the north or to relatively cohesive and large scale organizations as Yoruba and Edo in the west.

It is important to note that post-independence Nigeria inherited these clearly distinguishable ethnic groups which had been further isolated by discriminating and divide and rule colonial practices. The major ethnic or regional divisions included the dominant Northern Hausa Fulani, the eastern Egbo and the western Yoruba. These distinct ethnic, cultural and linguistic configurations were encouraged with each maintaining its dominance in its respective region of the country. The potential problems that arise among groups whose differences were deliberately reinforced by colonial divide and rule policies is the prevalence of traditional stereotypes and affinities which often transcend a national loyalties.

3. Impact of Colonial Divide-and Rule

Colonial rule, far from adopting policies that would obliterate ethnic differences and integrate Nigerian society, tended to undermine and inhibit integration. During the prelude to Nigeria's independence, a fatal attempt was made in an attempt to reorganize traditional units into local government wards and parliamentary constituencies. This reinforced the role of traditional political and social structures in the politics of the modern state and put these traditional institutions at the center of local level political party rivalries.

Consequently, the struggle for political power between competing individuals and groups invariably fractured along these ethnic, tribal, cultural, and ultimately regional cleavages and animosities. Even more crucial to the struggle for power and control was the fact that given a colonial economy which was dominated by the imperial administration, Nigeria's political elite merely entrenched the state control of the economy.

The process of the consolidation of these inherently decisive political structures and cultures is reflected by the split between the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) and Nnamdi Azikiwe's National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in the early 1940's along the ethnic division between the Yorubas and Igbos. Similarly, the Action Group (AG) was an offshoot of the political wing of the cultural associations of the Yoruba educated elite, the Egbe Omo Oduwa. The NCNC was closely allied with the Igbo State Union, while the Northern People's Congress (NPC) was the platform of the Fulani aristocracy. In the smaller ethnic groups there was a proliferation of political parties, each of which was indistinguishable from a particular ethnic or tribal cultural association.¹³⁵ Nigeria's political elite mastered the politics of reward for loyalty, versus punishment for disloyalty. This caused regional and ethnic animosities, and hostilities as a ready recipe for politicians inclined to capitalize on divisive or ethnic issues in order to exploit political advantage. As in most parts of West Africa, political debate then degenerated from policy issues to a game of chess on ethnic sensitivities and grievances.¹³⁶

Nigeria drifted into instability and ethnic tensions at the very dawn of independence. Shortly after independence in 1960, ethnically motivated political violence flared across the country culminating in the bloody Biafran war between the Eastern Igbo, who sought to secede and the Federal Military Government (FMG), dominated mainly by the Northern Hausa Fulani.¹³⁷

Overall, the Nigerian military became the worst victim of ethnic manipulations, animosities, and mutual suspicions of regional domination. Northern Nigerians, especially the Hausa-Fulani aristocracy have always been apprehensive of domination by the southerners, especially the Igbo, and lately the Yoruba. Consequently, ethnic rivalry

¹³⁵ J.S. Coleman, *Nigerian Background to Nationalism*, Berkeley: 1958, p.10. Also see Lloyd, *The Ethnic Background to the Nigerian Crisis*, p. 6.

¹³⁶ Zartman, "Posing The Problem," p. 9.

¹³⁷ Keith Panter-Brick, "From Military Coup to Civil War, January 1966 to May 1967," in Keith Panter-Brick eds. *Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to Civil War*, London: 1970, Athlone Press, p.28. Also see Metz, *Nigeria, A Country Study*, p. 53.

and often conflict has been the preeminent political problem for Nigeria during its entire existence.¹³⁸

4. A Lagging Timebomb?

The Constitutional introduction of a two party system in Nigeria's 1992 elections was ostensibly an effort by the Babangida regime to mitigate the institutionalized corruption that plagued Nigeria. However, it is needless to say that if the government were serious about addressing corruption there was much begging to done. The outcome of the election was annulled by the military, even though acclaimed by many observers as the fairest in Nigeria's history.¹³⁹ Significantly, one school of thought has it that the internationally denounced annulment was provoked by Hausa-Fulani concerns that the election of Mashood Abiola, a Moslem but Yoruba, would end northern domination of Nigerian politics. Others argue that the annulment was fueled by pressures from the military elite concerned about the end of the opportunity to accumulate wealth and control power. Either way, these are clear pointers to the deep-seated instability and the legitimacy crisis of the Nigerian regime.

Further, there is widespread awareness among Nigerians of growing ethnic conflicts and heightened schisms within the military. Currently, while the majority of the army's officers are southern belt Christians, the military has long been dominated by northern Moslems. This continues to be a subtle source of deep resentment by non-northern officers and civilian elite.¹⁴⁰

Another dimension to the religious flavor of Nigerian Politics and security is that in addition to the ethnic tensions within Nigeria's most sensitive state institutions (military and federal bureaucracy), there is a growing religious (Christian and Islamic) fundamentalism. This disturbing trend may have been aggravated by President Babangida's decision in 1986 surreptitiously to seek full membership for Nigeria in the

¹³⁸ Butts and Metz, *Armies and Democracy in the New Africa*, p. 5.

¹³⁹ Larry Diamond, "Nigeria's Search for a New Political Order," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 2, no. 2, Spring 1991, p. 56.

¹⁴⁰ Butts and Metz, *Armies and Democracy in the New Africa*, p. 8.

Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC). The propensity of the policy choices or political manipulations to ignite subsisting and potentially explosive ethnic and religious animosities was exemplified by the wave of conflict and tension that flared across the north and the middle regions of Nigeria. Yet, sporadic religious violence with inevitable ethnic undertones has claimed more than 5,000 lives between 1990 and 1994, with 1,000 killed in April 1991 alone during riots in Buachi and Kaduna.¹⁴¹

Without any risk of exaggeration, one can legitimately argue that across the West African sub-region there are manifestations of similarly deficient state structures, political dynamics, patterns, attitudes and elite political culture which are at best recipes for political instability and anarchy. Regimes that are at the brink of explosion, such as the Nigerian dictatorship, are thus sensitive to all tendencies towards instability and legitimacy challenges both at home and within its sphere of influence. This is particularly so because of the tendency of these instabilities toward cross border escalation, etc. Consequently, the rebel challenge in Liberia, the subsequent deterioration of the war along ethnic lines and intelligence of sub-regional dissident involvement with the NPFL was perceived by West African states with similar potential as an indirect threat to their own regime survival and legitimacy.

C. GHANA: IS THERE REALLY A DIFFERENCE?

One of the cardinal principles of Ghana's foreign policy since independence has been the fostering of the closest possible cooperation with neighboring countries with whom the people of Ghana share cultural history, ties of blood and economics.¹⁴² Notwithstanding such grandiose foreign policy proclamations, the dynamics of West African politics, the imperatives of national security and regime survival have left the relations between Ghana and its immediate neighbors ambivalent at best, and, more often than not, hostile.

¹⁴¹ *African Confidential*, May 17, 1991, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴² LaVerle Berry, ed., *Ghana, A Country Study*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1995, p. 236.

Following the Rawlings coup in 1979 and subsequent revolution in 1981, apprehensions of the precedent value of the changes in Ghana's domestic affairs pushed its relations with its neighbors on edge.¹⁴³ It is said that " a consistent preoccupation of Ghana, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire is that of national security. The Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) regime repeatedly accused Togo and Cote d'Ivoire of harboring armed Ghanaian dissidents who planned to overthrow or destabilize the PNDC."¹⁴⁴ Similarly, President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo has repeatedly accused Ghana of complicity to destabilize his regime.¹⁴⁵

This custom of accusations and counter accusations of covert instabilities has characterized relations between Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Both countries have traded accusations of masterminding insurgencies and coups, granting asylum to dissidents and exiles fleeing their respective regimes and conniving armed sabotage by these groups.¹⁴⁶ I argue that these features of mutual suspicion and vulnerability tend to characterize relations between most Community states. These sometimes lead to heightened tensions, especially when the neighboring regimes are not friendly. Consequently, short of open interference, the demands of self interest, national security, regime stability and legitimacy make West African regimes virtual interested parties in the internal political and security dynamics of their neighbors.

Ghana seems to share to a certain extent some of the vulnerabilities of its West African neighbors. Some recent trends indicate that there may be prevalent, even if subtle, ethnic or tribal rivalries and animosities in national politics. Even though it has been strongly disputed by the government, there have been widespread allegations of selective and discriminatory political and economic practices against the Rawlings regime. The best jobs and most of the lucrative government contracts are said to go to Ewes, members of President Rawling's tribe. The Rawlings regime is believed to have been particularly vindictive against the Ashantis, a dominant commercial and economic

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 238.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 240.

tribe, who are thought to perceive themselves to be the most industrious, enlightened and eligible group for political and economic hegemony in Ghana. The interesting contrast in this debate is that while President Rawlings has constantly asserted his disposition to call any honest and competent Ghanaian to public service, his critics maintain that his attitude is the precise opposite.

Nevertheless, the Rawlings regime has made commendable progress in making a transition from a populist dictatorship to democratic rule. However, it is significant to note that much of this political progress seemed to pivot around the “charismatic” personality of Rawlings rather than on sound institutional engineering and the development of the necessary democratic culture of negotiation, compromise, and mutual coexistence of political interest groups. In my opinion, the considerable gains made under the Rawlings hegemony stand to be consolidated if Rawlings himself would adopt a tendency towards de-emphasizing what is essentially a personality cult evolved around his person. In any case, the real test of Ghana’s stability and regime legitimacy will come in the year 2000, when President Rawlings becomes constitutionally precluded from seeking reelection .

There is also resentment, especially in Ghanaian opposition quarters, that the Rawlings regime has over the years discreetly dominated the military with the President’s tribesmen, the Ewes. Another respect in which Rawlings is accused of attempting to manipulate the loyalty of national security agencies to himself is in the “wholesale” absorption of erstwhile members of his partisan grassroots revolutionary cadres” into the security agencies. While the government contends that members of certain ethnic groups such as the Ashantis are not oriented towards the military or are usually otherwise unqualified, there is considerable concern that the government may be conniving a deliberate policy of exclusion. There have been concerns of subtle attempts to victimize and marginalize persons of northern extraction following divisions between Rawlings and some of his former revolutionary allies of northern dissent.

However, recent trends show that the government has adopted a policy of working towards restoring a reasonable and practically feasible ethnic balance and national representation in key institutions of state. However, there may already be structural

inequalities on the ground (ethnic imbalances) which often tend to undermine government policy from materializing at the levels of implementation. If this tendency to ethnic discrimination materializes, the current concerns about ethnic or tribal imbalances within the military as well as other security agencies could become a source of political instability at one point or the other.

D. THE ETHNIC OR TRIBAL DIMENSION OF CIVIL WAR: POTENTIAL SPREAD

I have argued that there are profound ethnic overlaps and fraternities which cut across indiscriminate colonial national boundaries. This fact invariably connects societies, cultures, tribes, clans, and in some cases families across national borders. As a result, legal nationals of one country more often than not tend to share in all the sensitivities, political concerns and interests of members of their ethnic groups and relatives who are nevertheless nationals of neighboring countries.

The Ewes and Akans in Ghana overlap into Togo as well as Cote d'Ivoire. It is reported that in Cote d'Ivoire, as across most of Africa, national boundaries reflect the impact of colonial rule as much as present day political reality bringing nationalism into conflict with centuries of evolving ethnic identification. Each of Cote d'Ivoire's large cultural groupings has more members outside its national boundaries than within. As a result, many Ivorian have strong social and cultural ties with people of the neighboring countries. These centrifugal pressures provided a challenge to political leaders in the 1980s as they did to the governors of the former French colony.¹⁴⁷

This is a standard analysis that holds true for all of the continent of Africa, and in particular, the West African sub-region. The tribal or ethnic overlaps across national boundaries and nationalities is illustrated by the fact that the Akans, who are predominant in Southern Ghana, also make up about 18% of the population in Cote d'Ivoire. They constitute communities in Togo as well. Similarly, the Mende, who form about 17% of the population in Cote d'Ivoire according to a 1980 estimate, also occupied territory in

Guinea and Mali, and the Krahns of Liberia, President Doe's tribe, also overlap into Cote d'Ivoire. Indeed, one of the principal causes of animosity against the Doe regime was the efforts that Doe is alleged to have made over the years to ensure the domination of the AFL by members of his Krahn ethnic group by pursuing a scheme of recruiting Krahns from neighboring Cote d'Ivoire.¹⁴⁸

According to Liebenow, only a few of Liberia's ethnic groups are found entirely within Liberia's borders. The majority of its approximately 16 tribes straddle the borders between Liberia and the neighboring states, especially Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire. In some cases, such as the Mende, to whom I have already referred, the majority of the group resides across the border in Sierra Leone. Also, some of Liberia's tribes, such as the Vai, Mandingo, and the Kpelle, who form the majority ethnic group reside on both sides of Liberia's north-western border with Guinea.¹⁴⁹

Further, the Fullah in Sierra Leone belong to large ethnic groups spread throughout much of West Africa, from Senegal to Lake Chad. They are said to be pastoralists who encroached Sierra Leone from the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Consequently, even today, the Fullah of Sierra Leone still look to the Futa Djallon mountains as their traditional home.

There are records of inter-ethnic rifts mainly between the Creoles of Sierra Leone and the peoples of the interior. While the former are mainly urban dwellers who regard themselves as the agents of European civilization, the latter deeply resented what they saw as a condescending and contemptuous Creole behavior. Groups such as the Susu, Vai, and Kissi, whose major distribution is in neighboring countries, are not very significant numerically, while the dominant groups-the Temme, Mende, and Limba- are mainly concentrated in Sierra Leone. Consequently, the problem of ethnic loyalties across national boundaries is arguably inconsequential. Even though initial inter ethnic rivalries

¹⁴⁷ Robert Handloff, *Cote d'Ivoire, Country Study*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 3rd edition, 1991, p. 49.

¹⁴⁸ "The Fall of Doe," *West Africa*, 17-23 September, 1990, p. 2468.

¹⁴⁹ Irving Kaplan, *Area Handbook for Sierra Leone*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923, p. 65. Also see Liebenow, *Liberia: The Quest for Democracy*, p. 35.

and competition filtered into political party formation, political competition soon became a North-South issue.¹⁵⁰

Although inter-ethnic relations in Sierra Leone are enhanced by urbanization, the rapid emergence of a political culture of greed, corruption and mismanagement have generated some animosities against the Creoles. For example, they are perceived as a privileged group with access to jobs, wealth, education, etc. These trends are very similar to those of the Americo-Liberian hegemony, which as I have argued, created the circumstances that brought Doe to power and essentially sowed the seeds of Liberia's war. Besides, the speedy support galvanized by the RUF against the government in Freetown seem to suggest that there may have been prevalent underlying resentment by the dispossessed and disillusioned rural Sierra Leonean population against the privileged urban dwellers who are mainly Creoles.

The very nature of population distribution vis-à-vis ethnic or tribal affinities creates a potential vulnerability for the spread of ethnic conflict. Generally conflict may be exported across borders by rebels, insurgents or dissidents who seek sanctuaries in neighboring countries. Almost invariably, sub-regional refugees have family members, relatives and sometimes whole tribes, and societies who identify with the political grievance of the exiles. These ethnic, tribal or family connections and affinities across national boundaries tend to foster the existence of rebel bases in neighboring countries.

E. THE DISSIDENT FACTOR

These pockets of dissident havens across West Africa are a constant source of instability to sub regional regimes. Consequently, the threat by dissidents or exiles rates very high national security priorities of West African governments and strongly influences both foreign and national security policy. Another reason for why the incidence of dissidents is perceived as a significant threat is the familiar tendency of African regimes towards covert interference in neighboring countries through support

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 76.

dissidents who are challenging or attempting to weaken their rivals. The examples of Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire speak to this reality.

The creation of refugees and small markets for free arms trafficking as well as the mere precedent value of war tends to promote the spread of ethnic conflict. Sometimes rebels or dissidents prior to or during a conflict may perceive some tactical or strategic gain that may be achieved by seizing territory or establishing bases across the country of fighting in order to establish sanctuary or access to resources or even supply and communication channels. For example, the NPFL initially established bases across Liberia's border with Cote d'Ivoire from where Charles Taylor commenced his campaign to unseat Doe. These bases were crucial from a tactical and a strategic standpoint because they facilitated supplies and communications from Libya through Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire. Even though this helped Taylor's war effort, it was not without complications. Specifically, this led to the air strikes of the Ivorian border town of Danane and other bridges within Ivorian territory by ECOMOG bombers. Without more, these responses by ECOMOG could have provoked a military confrontation involving Cote d'Ivoire.

In another connection, NPFL rebels are reported to have invaded Sierra Leone, thus exporting the war to that country. One plausible theory has been that the combined NPFL-RUF offensive was calculated to otherwise engage Sierra Leonean government troops at home and undermine their role in ECOMOG. Another school of thought has it that the NPFL support to the RUF was intended to establish control over Sierra Leone's mineral rich regions to enable Charles Taylor to plunder these minerals for his personal enrichment as well as to finance his war effort. It is significant that whatever his motives, Taylor's support has practically revitalized Foday Sankoh's RUF and has since plunged Sierra Leone into a civil war that has proven intractable. Admittedly, it is the challenge posed by the RUF to the government in Freetown that precipitated the overthrow of Momoh by Strasser, and subsequently the overthrow of the newly elected civilian government of president Ahmed Tijan Kabbah. Since then, a Nigerian-led "ECOMOG force" is said to be engaged in the exchange of hostilities with the junta of Major Jonny Koramah supported by rebels of the RUF. The net effect of all this is that the present instabilities in the Sierra Leone are a sequel to the Liberian civil war.

The propensity of a conflict to spread is related to the fact that African and West African governments have long mustered the practice of covert action insurgencies and counterinsurgencies against what may be perceived as unfriendly neighboring regimes. Sub-regional states often resort to the provision of sanctuary to dissidents and exiles and occasionally lend direct military assistance. This may be resorted to in a bid to weaken or completely destabilize unfavorable neighboring governments or regional rivals. This has been the trend that characterized the dynamics of the conflict in East and Central Africa as well as Liberia. As I tried to demonstrate, for a variety of reasons, Presidents Houphouet Boigny and Compaore provided staging facilities as well as sanctuary to enable Charles Taylor to launch his insurgency. While Compaore may have been fronting as a pawn for Ghaddafi as well as seeking to please his “Godfather,” President Houphouet, the latter was himself motivated by a desire for revenge against Doe.

The state of uncontrolled activity that characterizes the borders of West African states with their neighbors, especially when swamped by refugees, make feasible an easy trade in weapons and other illegal products. This is due partly to the fact that most sub-regional states are barely able to exert influence and control beyond urban centers and more so police their borders. Consequently, such an availability of weapons coupled with the porous borders and weak governments lacking decisive monopoly over the use of force is a clear recipe for cross-border challenges, insurgencies, and counterinsurgencies. In addition, the free trade in weapons across most of Africa’s borders is nourished by generous Cold War supplies into some of the zones that are now caught in civil strife and conflict. Consequently, the mere availability of weapons poses a threat to security and stability, especially in the context of societies or countries with deep seated and sometimes sharply divided social, cultural, economic, and political animosities. Moreover, there is a major lack of consensus as to the legitimacy of the political system.

Stedman argues that conflicts in Africa have also spread across borders through contagion or “demonstration effects”. The prevalence of conflicts *per se* raise fears that similar violence may erupt especially where the political elite tend to know that similar provocation, permissive conditions and predisposition are widespread. However, they also provide opportunities for leaders to respond to potential problems and possibly

preempt an eventual escalation of conflict. Indeed, I will argue that ECOMOG was such a preemptive measure and by so responding, West Africans have saved themselves even if temporarily, another lake regions. While the argument that the precedent value of conflict may fuel the spread across boundaries stands difficult to justify, the experience of Africa's independence struggles, political protest, and the more recent conflicts in Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Congo, etc., are all pointers to the fact that precedent may have influenced the spread of these conflicts, even if only marginally. As a result, it is plausible to say that an unimpeded NPFL rebel military success over Doe's AFL may have concluded yet another cookbook for disgruntled political interest groups, exiles, and dissidents within the West Africa sub-region. However, as a product of what I would regard as strategic thinking, some West African leaders saw the writing on the wall and appropriately were motivated to take the necessary preemptive measures by constituting ECOMOG.

VII. RATIONALE FOR RELIANCE ON ECOMOG

(A BOAT TO THE RESCUE)

ECOWAS did not express any strategic, military or security related goals whatsoever until the signing of the ECOWAS Protocols on Non Aggression in 1978 and the Protocol on Mutual Defense in 1981. Even then, it remained unclear as to whether or not the Treaty on Mutual Defense contemplated the circumstances in which ECOMOG was deployed. There is no unequivocal assertion that ECOMOG was deployed pursuant to the Protocol on Mutual on Mutual Defense. Moreover, neither the SMC nor any of the institutional mechanisms that have been resorted to bear any relationship with the language or spirit of the protocol. The Authority of Heads of State and Government set up the SMC during the ECOWAS Summit in May 1990. "Its mandate was broad and general, namely to intervene presumably as a mediator whenever a conflict threatened the stability of the West Africa region"¹⁵¹ I argue that this was a crucial strategic move necessary to overcome Africa's most significant colonial legacy and obstacle to regional cooperation, the Francophone-Anglophone divide.

A. BRIDGING THE ANGLOPHONE-FRANCOPHONE DIVIDE

Francophone West African states differ considerably from their Anglophone or Luciphone neighbors in their national security assessments and threat perceptions. The general reason for this is the security "insurance" provided by Paris. The expediencies of paternalistic French colonial and-post colonial policies have left a legacy of Francophone African regimes which derive both national security and regime legitimacy more from Paris than from their populations. Consequently, Francophone West African states can more often than not afford to be indifferent about threatening developments in sub-regional political dynamics. In practice, France's role as the central political and national security play-maker is entrenched through economic and military cooperation.

¹⁵¹ Robert A. Mortimer, "ECOMOG, Liberia and Regional Security in West Africa," in Edmond J. Keller and Donald Rothchild eds., *Africa in the New International Order*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996, p.151.

An explicit and practical manifestation of this is the case of Senegal, which joined an expanded ECOMOG only after extensive prodding, promises and guarantees of logistics, funding etc. by the U.S., but pulled out under after suffering comparatively very minor casualties.¹⁵² To the extent that a state does not share in the threat perception of an alliance, its commitment is likely to wane as a matter of time and with increasing costs, casualties, etc.

1. La Communauté and Regional Security Cooperation

The earliest manifestations of the sub-regional security implications of the Francophone-Anglophone emerged soon after the period of independence. The old demons of the legacy of colonial rivalry intruded events during the Nigerian civil war.¹⁵³ Many officials in the region believed that France, acting through its most compliant post independence proxy (President Houphouët Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire), was lending covert support to the secessionists in Biafra who were at war against the Federal Military Government (FMG). Seventeen years later, the community is grappling with the problems that ECOWAS was intended to help alleviate.

The Community is still haunted by the ghosts of the Anglophone-Francophone colonial rivalries. Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, two Francophones, were to a greater or lesser extent aligned with Charles Taylor's NPFL. They were aligned against a predominantly Anglophone ECOMOG. Togo, a Francophone member of the SMC, which had originally agreed to contribute troops to ECOMOG, reneged on its commitment without stated reasons.¹⁵⁴ As if these trends were not conclusive enough, Senegal, which initially would not send troops to Liberia, had ironically contributed a token force to the Gulf War. President Compaoré of Burkina Faso openly and consistently denounced ECOMOG as illegal and unjust. Senegal's leftist opposition movement, the Senegalese Democratic League (LSD), demanded the unconditional withdrawal of ECOMOG, which

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 155. As inducement for the Senegalese participation, the Pentagon gave Senegal \$15 million worth of military equipment, paid a major part of operational costs, provided logistic support and the U.S. promptly wrote off \$45 million public debt.

¹⁵³ "Dangers for ECOWAS," *West Africa*, 22-28 October 1990, p. 2689.

it described as an unjustifiable intervention by ECOWAS into the internal affairs of Liberia. The Senegalese Foreign Minister, Mr. Seydina Omar Sey, speaking to the Senegalese daily *Le Soleil* newspaper, protested at the manner in which the decision to deploy ECOMOG was reached, alleging that it set a dangerous precedent.¹⁵⁵ Guinea supported ECOMOG and contributed troops on the invitation of the SMC. As the traditional Francophone “prodigal son”, however, Guinea consistently took an anti-Francophone stance and therefore is the exception that proves the rule.

Another major factor that contributed to the state of paralysis of ECOWAS is rooted in the fact that the Francophone commonwealth remains a permanent dividing feature. With the singular exception of Guinea, the process of decolonization in Francophone Africa was merely ceremonial. Arguably, it appears to have presented an opportunity for France to reorient and better consolidate its strangle-hold over colonial territories and hapless populations by setting up African front men to do France’s work in exchange for comprehensive patronage.

Sub-Saharan Africa seems to have presented a rare opportunity to France in its scheme of global ambition. France’s foray into Africa was dictated mainly by *realpolitik* necessities within Europe; it had suffered a defeat by Prussia in 1870, leaving it weaker having forfeited Alsace. Meanwhile, France was mustering a growing industrial capability, requiring raw materials and markets amidst apprehensions of British scramble to exclusively annex the entire continent of Africa both as a source of raw materials and a market for expanding industrial activity.

Francophone Africa became indispensable to France’s ambition, designs, role and recognition as a world power¹⁵⁶ Consequently, the policy of assimilation, and subsequently, “*l’homme de Brazzaville*” cooperation in 1943; *loi cadre* reforms in 1956; and finally *la communauté*, or the Community, in 1958 were all logical policy imperatives necessary to enable Paris to replace the shackles of colonialism with more

¹⁵⁴ “Liberia: the Crises Deepens,” *West Africa*, 3-9, September, 1990, p. 2389.

¹⁵⁵ “Senegal: Reservations About ECOMOG,” *West Africa*, 10-16 September, 1990, p. 2455. Also see *Le Soleil*, August 24, 1990.

subtle, but still intrusive, and more binding chains of neocolonialism. The net effect of this was an ingeniously crafted structure of post-colonial political, economic social and cultural arrangements, which have left Francophone Africa in a vicious cycle of dependency on France and consequently, incapable of independent subscription to ECOWAS policies.

2. “Communaute Financiere Africaine” (CFA) Zone

Through the creation of the *Communaute Financiere Africaine* (CFA) zone, Paris maintains a stranglehold over the economies of Francophone Africa countries. Of the fourteen African nations in the CFA zone, as many as eight are in West Africa, and for that matter, ECOWAS. The CFA zone which pegged the currencies of member states to the French franc was itself an outgrowth of economic and financial arrangements by which France managed its colonies prior to WWII.¹⁵⁷ The zone ensured an effective annexation of the economies of member states, and thereby guaranteed Paris a central position on the political and terrain as well.¹⁵⁸

In addition to these structural financial linkages France continues to generate substantial aid to its African enclaves. For example, from 1990 to 1992 alone, French aid to Africa exceeded \$8.2 billion.¹⁵⁹ In addition to its unilateral support, France uses its European leverage to motivate multilateral initiatives with other European Union (EU) members, such as the Lome Convention. These economic and political entrenchment make France the “natural” guarantor of the political stability and legitimacy of regimes in Francophone Africa.

¹⁵⁶ Francis Terry McNamara, *France in Black Africa*, Washington: National Defense University Press, 1989, p. xiii.

¹⁵⁷ James M. Boughton, “The CFA Franc: Zone of Fragile Stability in Africa,” *IMF Finance and Development*, December, 1992, from *Lexis Nexis*.

¹⁵⁸ This is part of the explanation why it is difficult if not impossible to sustain an insurgency or coup d’etat in Francophone Africa without a prior fiat from Paris. The guarantee of regime stability is consequently more of a function of acceptance by France than friendly regimes across African borders. In contrast, most Anglophones practically fend for themselves.

¹⁵⁹ Peter J. Schraeder, “France and the Great Game in Africa,” *Current History*, May 1997, p. 209.

By far the most important factor which drives the diversity of threat perception among ECOWAS is the ubiquitous and forceful presence of French troops and bases throughout Francophone Africa. France permanently stations about 10,000 troops across Francophone Africa, with additions on standby to be deployed in the event of any contingency. The reinforcement of troops, logistics, supplies and communications were all guaranteed through various defense and military assistance “agreements” and “understandings” which gave French troops every conceivable priority including 24 hour landing rights, etc. throughout Francophone Africa. Perhaps they do even require landing rights since French troops are ever present.¹⁶⁰ Through a forceful military presence, France is able to ensure the stability of preferred regimes as well as to shore up or undermine the legitimacy of any regime that falls out of favor with Paris. To operationalize these military structures, the French established permanent bases across Africa, conduct joint training, educate African military officers in France, provide strategic and security assistance planning and resident advisors in every important sector of government, including the presidency of every Francophone African state.

Yet another important but less obvious implication of France’s economic and military “benevolence” is that it provides French intelligence services to African leaders and thus enables France to be privy to all levels of information of national secrets of Francophone Africa.¹⁶¹ Of course such intelligence is of great value during coups d’etat, insurgencies, etc., and Paris sometimes manipulates sensitive intelligence issues to facilitate compliance from African leaders.

The net effect of French military presence is the protection of French interests and assets by assuring the longevity of particular puppet African leaders and governments. The effect of colonial acculturation is to make the Francophone African population,

¹⁶⁰ John Chipman, *French Power in Africa*, Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1989, p. 118. There are suggestions that France is planning reductions in its foreign military presence as part of an austerity measure force on the Chirac administration to their need to join the first tier of the European Union single currency. While this signals hope for the independence of Francophone Africa, it would seem the prospects of a French disengagement from Africa is at best a hope.

¹⁶¹ Robert E. Handloff ed., *Cote d’Ivoire: A Country Study*, Washington, DC, 1991, p.183-184. In Cote d’Ivoire for example, radar networks for territorial surveillance set up in 1984 are supervised and controlled by the French.

especially the political elite, accept all policies that are sanctioned by the French. Thus, regime legitimacy becomes a mere function of the demonstration of the support of France for the regime in question. For example, Paris generally maintains so-called experts or advisors termed *counselors* in every important Ministry of state including an adviser to every President in Francophone Africa. These French *counselors*, wherever they are found, are usually the supervisors often over African deputies. The attachment of French *counselors* is even more common in the realm of national security, intelligence and defense. As a general rule of the common sense of survival and career advancement, an African official and officer should never challenge or contest a French officer or official even when the latter is patently in error. Even more ironic is the fact that more often than not, junior French officers and officials are posted to billets where they oversee Africans who may be far more senior, experienced, and in some cases, better qualified.¹⁶² In the public service, bureaucracy as well as the military, there are few things as politically incorrect and as professionally suicidal to contradict a French officer or counselor. Consequently, these counselors have the prerogative in all matters and decisions.

Specifically, the maintenance of a large number of French bureaucrats and entrepreneurs in Cote d'Ivoire ensured support for Houphouet Boigny's monopoly on political power and thereby contributed to the perceived effectiveness of the public and private sectors of the Ivorian economy.¹⁶³ Significant for this perception is the fact that in Cote d'Ivoire French Marines were permanently based at Port Bouet.¹⁶⁴ There are similar bases in Gabon, Chad, and, until recently, in Senegal.¹⁶⁵ In addition to these are several other military, paramilitary, and civilian security operatives littered in every bureaucracy that matters, especially in the gendarmerie and all security and or intelligence agencies. The physical presence of French forces, who the average Francophone African citizen (military and civilian) perceives as "superior," is a significant implicit warning against

¹⁶² This is confirmed by interviews with some Francophone African officers at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California.

¹⁶³ Robert E. Handloff ed., *Cote d'Ivoire: A Country Study*, Washington, DC, 1991, p. 29, 198.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.170. Guinea, Mauritania, and perhaps Burkina Faso do not have permanent French troops based there although France has unrestricted landing rights.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.199.

insubordinate political or military action that might create instability or undermine the legitimacy of a Paris-approved regime.

3. British Commonwealth of Independent States and Regional Security

In contrast to the Francophone countries of West Africa, post-independent Anglophone countries could not in any way count on such assistance from Britain. The British Commonwealth of independent states was not characterized by the pandering and cajoling that has become the norm of the *Communuaete*. British colonial policy was itself markedly different from the French and does not appear to have left the same depth of dependencies in social, political, economic, military and security structures of its former colonies. This is not to underestimate the value of post-independence British cooperation with members of the British Commonwealth, and the various mechanisms of cooperation by which London maintains leverage. However, in general, post-colonial British foreign policy towards its former colonies appears less direct and interventionist in comparison with the intrusive, direct, active, sustained, and comprehensive neo-colonial French policy towards the *Communuate* of Francophone African states.

Britain did not at any stage after independence maintain a comparable military presence or bases in its former African colonies. British foreign policy has little known history of the direct use of British troops in former colonies after independence. Even though the British continue to provide military education and training assistance,¹⁶⁶ this is by no measure near the scale and commitment of the French. For example, the Joint Services Training Team (JSTT) agreed to in 1962, by which Britain consolidated its military presence in Ghana by providing training and advisory support; with some British officers in command positions in the Ghana Air Force and Navy was aborted in 1971. Meanwhile, since 1958, Ghana has continued to receive military assistance from other sources including Canada, German Democratic Republic, China, Israel, U.S., Italy, Libya, Cuba and the Soviet Union. etc.¹⁶⁷ However, despite these varied influences, the

¹⁶⁶ LaVerle Berry, *Ghana, A Country Study*, Washington: GPO, 1995, p. 283.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 286

Ghanaian military appears to retain its basic British doctrine standards and military structures.

Similarly, Nigeria terminated a short lived defense pact with Britain shortly after independence in 1962.¹⁶⁸ A long standing training arrangement with Britain ended in 1986 with the “Nigerianization” of training.¹⁶⁹ Nigeria’s political and military assertiveness and independence from Britain is demonstrated by the fact that in addition to severing most military cooperation with its former metropole, Lagos had one of the most internationally diversified and balanced defense procurement strategies.¹⁷⁰ Nigeria is said to perceive France as an extra continental threat because among other reasons, Paris’ “close cultural political and economic and military ties with its former colonies perpetuated metropolitan loyalties at the expense of inter-African identity and ties.”¹⁷¹ Specifically, the extent to which France’s pervasive economic and military ties may inhibit regional security cooperation and the development of a regional collective security arrangement is best illustrated by the divisions within ECOWAS over ECOMOG.

It would also seem that the post-colonial political elite of Anglophone Africa, such as Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, and Siaka Stephens of Sierra Leone, were more “rebellious,” assertive and indeed independent of London than their Francophone counterparts such as Presidents Sedar Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Houphouet Boigny of Cote d’Ivoire, Eyadema of Togo, etc. In fact, Houphouet Boigny was even initially opposed to an early independence.¹⁷²

4. A Rescue?

As a result of these internal and external political factors, the West African Community reflected conflicting economic and national security concerns. This rendered any form of effective cooperation difficult, if not impossible. Like a house divided

¹⁶⁸ Chapin Metz, *Nigeria, A Country Study*, p. 258.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 284.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁷² Robert E. Handloff, *Cote d’Ivoire, A Country Study*, Washington: Government Publishing Office, 1991, p.23.

against itself, ECOWAS was in a large measure stillborn and therefore remained very much ineffective. This situation persisted until some ECOWAS members felt threatened by the trends in the Liberian civil war. ECOWAS became a handy forum within which sub-regional leaders tried to assume direct responsibility for management of the conflict in Liberia which they perceived to be a threat to their stability and the legitimacy of their own regimes.

The extent to which ECOWAS was divided by colonial and neo-colonial political, economic and security structures, made the prospects of achieving consensus on the deployment of an intervention force such as ECOMOG most unlikely. The central obstacle to sub-regional security cooperation was that the political and security postures of ECOWAS member states varied across the Anglophone and Francophone divide. I would even go so far as to suggest that the lack of consensus over ECOMOG was to a large extent inevitable because even if Francophone West African states were disposed to joining an intervention initiative, this would almost invariably be subject to “approval” of France. This explains why despite the need for Francophone participation to balance the Anglophone character of ECOMOG, it took a combination of factors including President Abdou Diouf of Senegal’s Chairmanship of ECOWAS and the overwhelming influence of the U.S. to secure a Senegalese participation.¹⁷³ This is more so because it is conventional Paris arm-twisting diplomacy for the French to decline the use of assets, equipment, logistics, etc. that are donated by France in operations, joint training exercises, or projects that do not receive prior Paris approval.¹⁷⁴ In the worse case scenarios Paris’ “gunboat diplomacy” can go so far as directly or indirectly intervening to punish by breaking disobedient local regimes”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Mortimer, “ECOMOG, Liberia and Regional Security,” p. 157.

¹⁷⁴ I established during interviews with Francophone African officers that this arm-twisting diplomacy is a well known practice of the French. They have had occasion to deny the use of French-donated equipment in joint exercises with other countries seeking to establish military cooperation with Francophone African countries. In yet other cases France returned Francophone African officers receiving training in France because their governments have opted to buy equipment from more competitive sources.

¹⁷⁵ Helen Chapin Metz, ed. *Nigeria, A Country Study*, p.262.

In the case of the Liberian civil war and ECOMOG, this general lack of independent policy-making may have been compounded by the emergence of French business interests in the mineral rich territories that fell to the NPFL. In any case, there was no practical need for countries such as Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso to contemplate the squeezing out of French control since they had already bandwagoned with the NPFL and consequently had no cause to be apprehensive about the prospects and implications of a rebel military victory in Liberia. In the context of such differing security structures, postures and perceptions of the threat provided the SMC a handy boat to rescue ECOWAS. Nigeria proposed the formation of an ECOWAS SMC to be responsible for mediating between the warring factions, imposing a cease-fire and ultimately finding a lasting solution to the conflict on the basis of a peace plan that had been adopted by the full compliment of the ECOWAS Authority.

This I argue was the strategic move that rescued the potential deadlock within the community which would have erupted mainly along the persisting Francophone-Anglophone divide. It is significant to note that even though the resort to the SMC by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), this was the first time it was used by ECOWAS. The covert and overt role of countries such as Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire had become popular knowledge throughout West Africa. Further, West African governments know too well that any direct stalemate between Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso on the one hand, and a line up of countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Sierra Leone, etc., would be a potentially explosive and could trigger a major regional crisis. Hence, it was critical in devising a mechanism to address the war, to avoid jeopardizing it along colonial rivalries and running the costly risk of failing to respond to the trends in the Liberian war or worse still, ending up in a major regional crises. The good news for future of Africa's regional security cooperation is that Paris in the wake of new EU realities is battling with its addiction to Africa and may be cutting its military presence and evolving more enlightened cooperation with Africa.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Craig R. Whitney, "Paris Snips Ties Binding it to Africa," *The New York Times*, 25 July, 1997, p. A5.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The need to evolve and build upon a sub regional security cooperation system cannot be overemphasized. Given the end of the Cold War, the prevailing opinion among U.S. policy makers is that the U.S. has no vital economic or security interests in Sub-Saharan Africa and therefore should not directly intervene in its crises. Given the new priorities of the post-Cold War era the UN, the international community and Africa's former colonial masters are less likely to intervene in the future. Consequently, the future of intervention in conflicts that plague the continent is going to depend more on what Africans can offer themselves and how they can unite to deal with regional instabilities. As such, the lessons, relevance and implications of ECOMOG for the future of humanitarian relief, political stability and regional security in West Africa seem invaluable.

This thesis shows that the principal actors in ECOMOG have profound similarities in their political and security dynamics. Significantly, the security posture of these states differs considerably from their Francophone neighbors due mainly to the inherent dependence of the latter on France as the guarantor of security, legitimacy and stability. The shared vulnerabilities of ECOMOG states facilitated the common perception that the Liberia civil war was a threat to their stability and legitimacy. This was specifically because of the precedent value of an NPFL victory, the participation of sub-regional dissidents with the NPFL, the degeneration of the war along tribal lines, the risks of refugees, and the hostility of Taylor which made some sub-regional leaders perceive the Liberia conflict as one that would infest their own countries if it were not preempted.

This analysis shows from both theoretical and practical perspectives, that ECOMOG states (for that matter all sovereign states) in their international relations, especially in the realm of security cooperation, tend to be guided by strategic calculations of national self-interest. It was the convergence of these strategic concerns that enabled some sub-regional leaders to foster such a cohesive alliance to balance against the threat. On the other hand, it is instructive in explaining how a shared interest in the fortunes of

the NPFL resulted in what was essentially a bandwagoning behavior by some Francophone West African states.

A. EFFECTS, LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF ECOMOG

ECOMOG has demonstrated the strengths as well as weaknesses of sub-regional security cooperation especially in the context of active conflict or war. As a test case of West African peacekeeping or enforcement and the first of its kind by a sub-regional organization, it has generated many effects lessons and implications.

Importantly, this research explains the strategic mindset of West Africa leaders, in the context of the post Cold War security challenges that are likely to plague Africa and other parts of the world in the foreseeable future. Consequently, these insights may facilitate the understanding of security cooperation in Africa and elsewhere.

ECOMOG raises the important question of how in an instability-prone region such as West Africa could ECOWAS contemplate the effective promotion of economic integration without reference to a regional security framework. The dominance of security issues and concerns for regional stability make it imperative that economic relations be harnessed on a sound political and security foundation. Otherwise, without stability, the objectives of economic integration are difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish. ECOMOG also illustrates the awareness of the inextricable link between economic objectives and regional security.

But even more importantly, ECOMOG has brought to the fore some of the structural and procedural obstacles that underlie West African power politics. An understanding of such constraints will influence policy attempts at evolving promoting cooperation in Africa. vacuum that resulted from the major shifts in global economic, political and security, order.

As ECOMOG clearly brings to the fore, cooperation across the Anglophone-Francophone divide is a major obstacle. However, if French withdrawal materializes, West African states may be better disposed to arriving at a threat consensus as the basic prerequisite for effective sub-regional security cooperation.

From a theoretical significance, ECOMOG elicits that the lack of a shared vulnerability to the perceived threat puts different member states at cross purposes, thus preventing the convergence of security needs and an alliance cohesion. As such, the future of a sustained and supported sub-regional coalition will depend on the how much longer Paris will continue to turn its back on its African proxies.

This leads to the necessity to re-examine the ECOWAS Protocol on Non-Aggression. Clearly, Community states were focused on preempting covert and overt acts of aggression among themselves, while perpetuating the principle of non-intervention. Similarly, the ECOWAS Protocol on Mutual Assistance and Defense needs to be made relevant. This protocol in principle reflects some conscious attempts to deal with some of the major lapses and impediments to the prospects of evolving some type of sub-regional collective security regime such as ECOMOG. These protocols raise a myriad of issues and their relevance and utility in their present form is put in issue by ECOMOG.

The promoters of ECOMOG chose the option that held a promise of political correctness, moral justification and ready legitimacy as practically feasible. Determined to circumvent all impediments, West African leaders masked their real, strategic and legitimate motives with rhetoric. Arguably, to the extent that ECOMOG has fostered some regional cooperation, it has also heightened mutual suspicion among regional leaders and probably made difficult the prospects of initiating future cooperation.

Significantly, the lessons of diplomacy, compromise, negotiation, and even national interests seem opposed, a fact that could not be escaped. West African leaders, especially Nigeria, may have learned crucial lessons of negotiation and dialogue.

From an operational point of view, ECOMOG showed that although peace enforcement operations may create conditions for negotiations and a cease-fire, they tend to be costly in terms of in human resources and logistics. The casualties that result from enforcement operations tends to generate international disapproval, unfavorable press and adverse public opinion and consequently undermines support and legitimacy. The lessons on the necessity of pursuing a broad consensus could not be better learned, although Nigeria's subsequent rush into the Sierra Leonean crises does not reflect this learning.

The cautious approach of Ghana, Guinea and other members of ECOMOG however is instructive.

To a certain extent, ECOWAS failed to exploit fully its first opportunity to evolve and lay out the rules of a security cooperation framework. In addition, ECOMOG's modest attempt suffered severe setbacks and considerable criticism largely because of sub-regional leaders to pretenses and propaganda.

ECOMOG also shows that while "soft" or "neutral" intervention may be possible, there are as a reality no neutral state actors. States, big or small, weak or powerful, are all motivated by national interests in their international relations and policy. This golden rule of state behavior admits of lesser exceptions, particularly in the realm of national security. However, rhetoric seems to be a conventional spice in the international relations recipe. Consequently, leaders, politicians and policy makers ought to possess the insight to see beyond rhetoric and political correctness, the real motivations of state actors. The importance of such an insight to the fashioning of appropriate policy responses and the pursuit of desired goals and interests cannot be over emphasized.

From a political perspective, it is significant that ECOMOG was a catalyst for the subsequent adoption in 1991 of the ECOWAS Declaration of Political Principles at the Abuja Summit, in Nigeria. This declaration pledged to the observance of democratic principles and respect for fundamental human rights. This joint resolve appeared to accelerate the processes of political and economic reform that had already begun in countries such as Ghana, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and even Nigeria.

Because of this and other reasons, Liberia, and the onerous burden of sustaining ECOMOG, may have taught regional dictators that whatever the constraints, it is in their own interests to pursue accountable and democratic government. However, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have already suffered severe setbacks to their troubled transitions. Nigeria's anxiety in to restore democracy to Sierra Leone illustrates this awareness despite its inability to accelerate change in their own country.

Significantly, ECOMOG was the first peacekeeping effort of that scale that was not conducted by the UN. It was also the first in which the UN cooperated with a sub-regional organization in a major peacekeeping and enforcement operation as a secondary

actor. These circumstances, coupled with the approval and support of the UN as well as the OAU of the ECOWAS Peace Plan, may have given ECOMOG and its principals an improved profile, leverage, legitimacy and visibility in the international community.

The experience of troop contributing countries funding their own participation without any financial or other support from the ECOWAS Secretariat brought into focus the need to contribute to ensure the financial viability of ECOWAS in other ensure its capability to deal with future contingencies.

Specifically, ECOMOG provides a rudimentary framework for the evolution of a conflict resolution mechanism. This seems most timely and appropriate, given the recommendations of the U. S. government and its allies for the formation of an African Crises Response Force. Admittedly, ECOMOG suffered severe constraints, but it may be argued that in reality it is as best as West Africans may get under the circumstances. Moreover, ECOMOG has been the only event that has attempted to wrestle some of the structural legacies of Africa politics and security cooperation.

The dark side of ECOMOG is that it has many implications for regional security and stability, but even more importantly, for the future of democracy, human rights and the rule of Law. If West Africa's teething democracies should stall, a mechanism such as ECOMOG could become a means by which corrupt, illegitimate and unaccountable dictatorships may collaborate across national boundaries and mutually assist each other to consolidate and perpetuate their wield on power. In particular, the intransigence of Nigeria's corrupt military oligarchy against embarking on the inevitable transition to civilian rule raises questions about Nigeria's designs in ECOMOG.

However, if democracy were to prevail beyond the mere formalism of elections, etc. within the West Africa sub region, then ECOMOG may provide the much needed security cooperation framework for responding to regional instabilities which are likely to occur.

Significantly, ECOMOG projected into the political debate both in Africa and in the international community, the relic of colonial Anglophone - Francophone rivalries. In my view, this is likely to remain a major obstacle that will challenge the strategic insight of West African policymakers in all spheres of regional cooperation and, in particular,

security cooperation. Even in the unlikely event of a French pullout, the security vacuum that would result may warrant security cooperation mechanisms such as ECOMOG.

Even though it provided a real life theater and opportunity for a practice and testing of equipment and human resource capabilities, ECOMOG has revealed its lack of training, logistics, planning , professionalism, etc. It has revealed the specific needs of West African forces. Inadequacies in communications, transportation, logistics and other equipment all came to the fore; subsequent military assets may be better applied.

It is necessary in the furtherance of global security, that the international community assist West Africans to accomplish appropriate levels of training, logistics and supplies necessary to execute humanitarian relief, peacekeeping and enforcement operations and other military operations other than war. This will reduce if not eliminate the frequency of the direct deployment of Western or U.S. forces in Africa even under austerity. Enhanced training and capabilities will likely improve military professionalism and influence civil-military relations.

Military assistance offers contingency response capabilities and “first aid.” However, the sustained solution to the Africa’s conflicts may be rooted in addressing the deficit of democracy on the continent. The dispatch with which most West African leaders initiated democratic reforms following Liberia’s crises is indicative of the realization that democracy can be a conflict-mitigating factor. International opinion should consequently not relent in assisting critical community members such as Nigeria in moving towards reform.

ECOMOG is a clear indication that given a relatively permissive international environment, Africans in general and West Africans in particular, can manage their own affairs. Although the financial, economic and other costs of maintaining substantial levels of troops, logistics, communications, etc., will continue to hurt West African economies, ECOMOG is crucial to the pursuit of stability in Africa. Ultimately, it provides an imperfect model for the development of a West African crises response capability which is a prerequisite for statehood and regional self-sufficiency.

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